

Memoir Writing

What is it? Memoir writing is a form of an autobiography and written in narrative style. It is essentially a retelling of a personal event in your life. These events are usually notable or life changing in some way. Think of it as taking a vivid picture of an event in your life and showing it to readers in a compelling way. On the other hand, writing an autobiography spans a long series of events or an entire lifetime.

How do I start to write a memoir? As with all writing, it is important to brainstorm key events in your life you won't forget. For most high school students this might mean the birth of a new baby, your first car, something embarrassing or funny, a significant move, family changes, illnesses or injuries and etc. Another good place to get ideas is from photo albums or talking to relatives. Generating as many ideas as you can is an important first step.

Important things to keep in mind:

- *Memoirs are meant to be read by other people.*
- *Memoirs are NOT diaries, journal entries or blogs. These are written with the writer's own interests in mind.*
- *Memoirs are closely related to storytelling because they tell a story about your life.*
- *Memoirs do NOT have to be in chronological order*

Challenges of memoir writing: Narrowing down your ideas can be difficult because you are looking for a story that will interest your readers. On the other hand, it doesn't have to be earth shattering. The best memoirs are usually written about a particularly emotionally charged event in your life. Because of this, the writing can start to get away from the writer and it becomes lifeless. The key to writing a memoir is stay focused, include interesting and vivid details that engage the reader. It sounds simple enough, but can be tricky.

To help keep your memoir writing fresh, ask yourself this question: Who cares?

How will I know if my memoir is worth reading? Good memoirs are also good stories. If the story has a universal meaning that can touch others besides yourself, it is probably a strong idea. Try hard to create a piece that is both entertaining and meaningful. Keep the reader reading by including details that readers can relate to. For example, most people understand and relate to what it feels like to drive for the first time, but the details that you use will separate your experience from others. Likewise, if you wrote about a car crash you were in, readers can relate even though not everyone has experienced one.

Other Tips:

- *Write in first person (I, me, etc.)*
- *Use sensory details*
- *Use similes and metaphors where appropriate*
- *Use authentic dialogue with proper punctuation (quotation marks)*
- *Avoid sounding like a reporter who records only the facts*
- *Use an interesting introduction that immediately invites the reader into the story.*
- *Readers want to learn something about life from the memoir.*