

Graded Writing Assignment

**Writing Skills:
A Personal Narrative**

This assignment is intended to assist you in composing a personal narrative, fulfilling the requirements for the first graded writing assignment in your *Written Communication* course. The assignment defines the personal narrative and describes what's involved in its construction. It defines the first-person point of view and explains why it's necessary. The assignment also offers several different ideas for essay topics, as many students have trouble identifying appropriately focused topics.

This assignment reviews the essential parts of an essay, as well as the steps of the writing process and the guidelines for defining and avoiding plagiarism. The assignment offers resources to help you ensure mastery of grammar and mechanics. Finally, it offers rules for formatting and questions to ask yourself about your document before submitting it for grading. By the end of this assignment, you should be ready to submit your essay for grading.

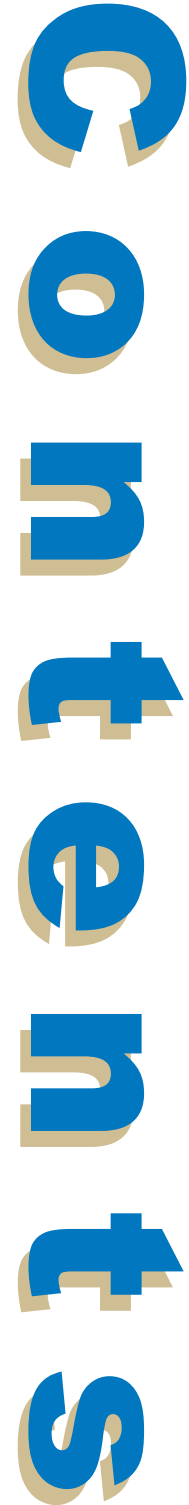
The Penn Foster instructional staff recognizes and appreciates the importance of writing as a form of self-expression. That noted, please be aware that we are an educational institution and, consequently, we are legally tasked with mandated reporting of criminal activity. Should your writing contain a description of criminal activity of any kind (by you, including you, or against you), we are obligated to contact and alert the proper authorities. While you are certainly encouraged to express yourself in your writing, we want you to be aware of our binding obligation to take action when information regarding criminal behavior is relayed.

When you complete this assignment, you'll be able to

- Differentiate between the parts of an essay
- Use resources to improve grammar and mechanics
- Develop a piece of writing without plagiarizing
- Develop a first-person essay using the steps of the writing process
- Construct a personal narrative

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Writing Skills: A Personal Narrative

For your first writing assignment in this course, you're being asked to write a personal essay, which can also be referred to as a *personal narrative*. The essay that you produce must be based solely on your first-hand personal experience(s), told from the first-person point of view, and meet the given length requirement of 750 to 2,500 words. Within this assignment, we'll provide information to help you effectively write from a first-person point of view.

In short, this will be an essay about *you*.

The essay that you write should tell a story that will represent who “you” are to your audience—people who don't know you personally. It should be completely original and *shouldn't* contain any type of research; your story should be told entirely from thoughts and memories. Instead of relying on research to construct your essay, you'll rely on your own memory and awareness of people and surroundings. This will ensure that your writing is credible, ethical, and authentic.

WHAT IS A PERSONAL NARRATIVE?

A personal narrative is an essay about the author. In a very basic sense, all essays are personal, in that it's impossible to avoid a personal opinion, even in the most objective writing. However, the personal narrative makes no effort to hide the author's personal connection to the text. It's openly accepted and celebrated that the author is the subject. The personal narrative not only accepts, but *demand*s the thoughts, feelings, ideas, and personal input of the author.

The author of a personal narrative is telling a true story from his or her life. The author isn't making up the story or writing fiction.

Personal narratives are essentially *nonfiction* stories. What the essay should do is to create a map that takes the reader from point A to point B to point C. Of course, things aren't always as straightforward as A-B-C. It's your job, as the author, to pull together all the necessary elements of your story so they can efficiently guide the reader through your story, ending with the ever-important lesson learned or insight gained from your experience.

The essay that you create should be completely unique to you. It must show your reasoning behind your opinions and must provide specific examples from your personal experience, which will ultimately show your authority to write on your chosen topic. All (or at least a great majority) of what you write must be based on what you already know and have experienced directly yourself. By using specific examples of what happened to you directly or of what you personally observed happening to friends or family members, you're providing your own unique, distinctive perspective on the topic.

First, you must decide on an original focus, or "slant," by which to discuss your topic. For example, if you write about a vacation, you should make it a point to state or *show*, as a part of your introduction, your unique viewpoint on the experience in question. (For example, instead of simply stating, "I went to Hawaii," it would be much more specific and descriptive to state, "My vacation to Hawaii was one of the most exciting times in my life.") Next, you should use that "slant" or focus to guide you through choosing and organizing the details and examples you'll include in your essay. Avoid giving only a list of general information or a diary account of what happened from the time you jumped out of bed, took a shower, and ate breakfast. That type of "catalog" approach lacks reader appeal and doesn't help you to develop your personalized focus on the experience.

Students should, if absolutely necessary, research aspects of the narrative only to verify facts or provide statistics to support ideas. You should keep in mind that factual information can't be the main focus of your essay. By merely restating or paraphrasing what you've learned through research, you're failing to provide your original thinking on the topic.

Remember that using others' opinions or ideas in your own words is also not proper, even if you agree with them or feel that they best explain your own thoughts and feelings. If you choose to include some information obtained from research, you should carefully choose only one or two items that support your opinion or viewpoint, making certain that your opinion or viewpoint (not the researched information) is the main focus. The vast majority of your essay must come from your direct knowledge and experience.

WHY USE THE FIRST-PERSON POINT OF VIEW?

Point of view refers to the writer's relation to the story being told. Writing from a *first-person point of view* requires the frequent use of pronouns "I" and "we." The narrative or story is told from the writer's personal point of view. Some examples of work written from a first-person point of view include personal essays, autobiographies, and memoirs. When writing from the first-person point of view, you're relaying your personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences and speaking for yourself *only*. You can make observations regarding others, but you're not able to speak for them or truly know what they're thinking.

Take a look at the following sentences to find out why point of view makes a difference.

The first day of high school is difficult for everyone.
My first day of high school was a difficult one.

These sentences may, in essence, serve the same purpose when used as the topic sentence in a paragraph, setting up a story about the author's first day of high school (see below). However, there's a difference between them in both voice and point of view. The first sentence is a sweeping generalization (the author doesn't have the authority to state that this day is difficult for every student) with a noticeably absent narrative voice; the second sentence reflects the author's personal experience and uses the first-person point of view. The second, more personal sentence is the type you should utilize in your essay.

Now take a look at the following introductory paragraphs:

The first example is written from a second-person point of view.

The first day of high school is difficult for everyone. If you're in a new school or city, your friends may have changed. Everyone is unknown, and you might feel alone. Students may be curious and looking for friendship, but every glance seems to be an invitation for you to run back home. If you can meet a friend and establish a connection, it can change everything.

The second example is written from a first-person point of view. Your personal narrative needs to be written from this point of view.

My first day of high school was a difficult one. I entered a new school, in a new city, without the familiar comfort of my middle school friends. I encountered strangers around every corner. With every glance, I felt more and more out of place. Thankfully, that was the day I met Olivia, who changed everything for me.

Writing from a second-person point of view requires telling a story from another individual's point of view. Pronouns such as you and yours are used when writing from a second-person point of view. It's common to see second-person point of view used in speeches and advertising.

These introductory paragraphs essentially communicate the same basic point. However, while the first paragraph conveys a second-person, generalized account of the student's first high school experience, the second paragraph conveys a much more personal, first-person account. Also, when the reader reaches the end of the first paragraph, there's a sense of completeness, as if the paragraph doesn't need to connect to any other idea. When the reader reaches the end of the second paragraph, there's a desire to read more, to find out more information about Olivia and how she "changed everything" for the author; this is the effect your introductory paragraph *should* have. The reader should be enticed into reading more, which is incredibly difficult to achieve using generalizations. All things considered, the reader doesn't want to hear about "everyone's" high school experience; he wants to learn more about you, as the author.



If you're still unsure on how to approach your personal narrative, here are two videos that may help:

Lesson—Personal Narratives:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTVWUKBjp1o&list=PLZt42-VBOiOeSMgDrZfb6G0TqzeSOE6ax>

Writing the Personal Essay:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjqpZbYe6xA>

If the direct link fails to work, please copy and paste the title and link into the search bar on youtube.com.

NOTHING TO WRITE ABOUT?

A personal narrative (or an essay in general) isn't generally written for the sake of recording an event or explaining a procedure. Instead, it's used to explore generalizations, recall experiences, or interpret experiences on a personal level. Besides relating a series of events, a personal narrative may also

- Reveal a personal insight or unique personal understanding about the experience or the people involved
- Expose a personal conflict or problem that may or may not be solved within the confines of the essay itself
- Reveal a personal change achieved through struggle, growth, or choice

Since you've lived to high school age, you surely have *something* to write about, a story that others can relate to that you would be willing to tell. Whether or not it's something that you think is exciting or socially relevant may be another story altogether, but the fact remains that you *do* have topics that you can write on. An excellent example is how and why you've come to an online learning institution in pursuit of your high school diploma.

The key to this particular assignment is to choose a topic that interests you, one that you feel comfortable sharing with an audience. Perhaps the following suggestions might spark some ideas.

- Some experiences may initially seem trivial and insignificant, but prove in time to be important to your life's journey or to the development of your personality. Present one of these experiences from your life so that it gives the audience a sense of how your life was changed.
- First-time experiences tend to be especially memorable. Think about the first time you rode a bicycle, went skiing, went to an amusement park, went on a date, attended school, went on vacation, and so on. What was special about this particular event that still stands out in your mind? What did you think? How did you feel? Show your audience why this first-time experience was special enough to you to remain in your memory.

- Experiences that cause us extreme happiness or sadness remain in our memories. Consider the moments in your life that have made you happiest; consider the moments in your life that have made you sad, angry, or even depressed. These experiences may have something in common. Show your reader why these particular experiences merited the reactions they did. Also, you may want to examine what your reaction says about you.
- Many relationships throughout our lives help us to grow and mature; some are positive and some are negative. Relay the details of such a relationship from your life. Be sure to provide enough information so the audience has a sense of how you were changed or impacted by the experience.
- Childhood memories can be very powerful. Choose an event from your childhood that still stands out in your memory. Relay the event to your audience, showing why this event had meaning for you as a child, as well as why it still has meaning for you today.
- Each of us has a particular place that triggers memories, whether they're positive or negative. Show your audience, through descriptions of relevant events, why this particular place holds meaning for you. Please keep in mind that your audience will most likely not be familiar with the place in question, so you'll need to make your best effort to guide your readers as carefully as possible.
- The concept and value of education are different for each individual. Examine what education means to you. Show the reader how education has affected your life, whether positively or negatively, and how your idea of education may have changed over the years.

ESSENTIALS: THE PARTS OF AN ESSAY

To make a clear overall point, any story needs a beginning, a middle, and an end. In short, an author must provide his or her readers with a sense that every event starts and then, subsequently, finishes. However, no story can relate every detail of what happened in a given situation. Therefore, each individual writer must choose details carefully and use them to build a scene that reflects the chosen point or mood.

Introduction

There are many appropriate and interesting ways to begin an essay. Whatever method you use, you must catch the readers' attention and give your audience an idea of what will follow. The first sentence (or even the first paragraph) should be like a store window; it should make people (who might otherwise pass by) stop and enter the store. You can choose to appeal to your readers' curiosity or feelings to engage them. Your primary objective is to hook the audience and get them interested in reading more.

Let's take a look at what should happen in the introductory paragraph.

Define the Topic

You've been given an assignment to write an essay about one of your hobbies. How can you get your reader interested in what you have to say? The simplest way is normally to plunge right into your subject.

Let's consider an example.

For hundreds of years, hunting was necessary in order to avoid starvation. Even though it's no longer a required activity to keep our families fed, some of us still find the thrill of the hunt and the connection to nature intoxicating. Hunting is absolutely my favorite hobby and one that I'm able to enjoy with my friends and family.

This paragraph has defined the subject, stated that there's a difference of opinion about it, and invited the reader to go on and read more. This is an example of a good, direct beginning.

Start with an Incident or Anecdote

Plunging directly into the subject is certainly not the only way to catch the readers' attention. You may also start with an incident, an anecdote, or some personal experience—something that will appeal to the readers' personal curiosity.

Let's consider another example.

My grandfather took me into the Smoky Mountains for my very first hunting trip. After years of listening to his stories, I looked forward to finally seeing him in action. However, what I remember most about that weekend is the time we spent together. He taught me lessons that I will never forget.

While this paragraph will require more information to be complete, the personal anecdote provides an effective beginning.

Start with a Bang

You can interest your reader in your subject with a startling, striking, or unexpected beginning. To do so, you'll need to make a special effort to find something surprising to relate to your topic. If you can do it, it's an excellent way to start.

Let's consider a third example, one that incorporates a sense of mystery.

I heard the rustling sounds getting closer. My heart was pounding so hard that I was sure I would be seen. I peered into the brush, and that was when I saw him. I raised my gun, set my sights, and pulled the trigger. It was a successful kill shot.

You can also surprise the reader with the following:

Are you someone who would like to save money? An avid hunter living in an area that allows year-round opportunities for game can provide food for his family and avoid paying thousands of dollars in grocery bills.

Following the opening sentence, the introductory paragraph should solidify your topic and your approach, setting the mood and tone for the remainder of the essay. Please remember, however, that the introduction isn't the place to begin your actual story; that's the task of the body paragraphs.

Finally, aside from an interesting beginning, keep in mind that your essay needs to have a strong *thesis statement*, one which will be supported by the essay as a whole. Your thesis statement is simply the main point of your essay, the reason you're telling this particular story. It must be present not only to help grasp the readers' attention, but also to inform the readers of the approach you're taking on a particular topic in your essay.

Body

The *body* of your essay should consist of several fully developed paragraphs that thoroughly develop the main points of your essay (mentioned in your introduction) according to the approach defined in your thesis statement. Be sure that you include appropriate and logical transitions between ideas within paragraphs, as well as between the paragraphs themselves. One idea must logically follow another as you lead your readers through your story.

Since the introduction sets up the content of the body paragraphs, there should be nothing covered in the body of the essay that's different from what's promised in the introductory paragraph.

HELPFUL HINT

Your introduction doesn't need to be written first. Some writers find it helpful to write the body of the essay first and then go back to write the introduction later.

HELPFUL HINT

Your thesis statement is simply your main idea for the essay. It functions the same way a topic sentence does in a paragraph.

HELPFUL HINT

The body of your essay should contain your story from beginning to end. Your story should not begin in the introduction or end in the conclusion. Keep it confined to the body paragraphs.

HELPFUL HINT

A conclusion and an ending aren't the same. The ending of your story should be contained in the body; the conclusion paragraph has its own job to do.

HELPFUL HINT

Begin by writing the way that you speak. After you have your story down, you can go back and correct grammar, word choice, and sentence structure.

Conclusion

The *conclusion* paragraph should restate the content of the introduction, summarize the main points covered in the body paragraphs, tie up any loose ends, and bring closure to the essay. Be sure that your conclusion restates the overall message of your narrative, so that your readers are left with your main point fresh in their minds. The best conclusions are directly tied to the introduction and give closure to the work as a whole. This isn't the place to write the actual ending to your story or to introduce new information.

Voice

Personal narratives should be casual and are often emotional. If you're writing about something you feel very strongly about, your story should evoke emotions in your readers as well. When you show your audience how you feel about something and why, your readers can recognize your sincerity. Your sincerity will, in turn, allow your readers to relate to you and/or your situation.

Be firm about your opinions, your feelings, and your views so that the reader may get a clear picture of who you are and what you stand for. Use the voice and tone that come most naturally to you, but keep in mind that this is an academic assignment. You'll need to use appropriate language and proper grammar.

It's very important to use your own vocabulary; an essay in which the author has made use of a thesaurus stands out, but not in a good way. When you honor your own voice and use the words you know, your writing is easily viewed as authentic, and an audience will recognize and appreciate this.

REVIEW: USING THE WRITING PROCESS

Earlier in this course, you learned about the writing process and its effectiveness. Now is your chance to use that process to your advantage, as it will allow you to efficiently and effectively draft your essay.

The stages of the writing process are covered below.

Prewriting

The first thing to do during the prewriting stage is to determine your purpose, medium, and audience. You should be aware by this point that your medium is the personal narrative (the essay) and that your audience consists of a general and diverse population of people who aren't familiar with you, your life, or your work. What you need to establish, for the purpose of beginning your essay, is your purpose. Your goal is to use one or more of the five types of prewriting (brainstorming, freewriting, webbing, researching, and journal keeping) to find the specific idea you want to choose as your focus.

Below are suggestions to help get you started on your prewriting.

- If you can't think of anything to write down, just write something, anything. Eventually thoughts that are relevant and related will begin to come to you.
- Don't think too much about it or apply too much pressure to yourself. Just jot down anything and everything you can think of.
- Unless you're relatively focused on a particular topic, do your prewriting exercises on all different topics. If you've chosen a topic or a specific area of focus, try to confine your prewriting exercises to that one topic or area.
- You can use full sentences and paragraphs, or you may simply use words and phrases. You may even use a combination of both. You should use whatever makes you most comfortable and allows you to express your ideas.

- If you get stuck, try taking a different approach to some of the words, phrases, or sentences you've already written down. Soon, new ideas will begin to surface.
- If it doesn't contribute to nervousness about the assignment, try to set a time limit and write continuously during that time.
- During this stage, don't be concerned about how your writing sounds. The idea in this stage of the writing process is to try to discover ideas that might not otherwise occur to you.

When you finish your prewriting activities, don't discard them. If you decide to change the direction of your essay during the revision process, referring back to prewriting exercises may help to make organizational decisions easier.

Planning

Once you've established an acceptable topic, you must decide which thoughts you wish to include, organizing them in a logical order. Outlining and/or mapping may help you make some difficult decisions. Keep in mind, however, that effective planning requires you to already have a firm grasp on your purpose, medium, and audience.

During the planning stage, you'll be writing out your main ideas and organizing them in an order that your audience will be able to understand. This will set up a framework for paragraph development in the next stage. Remember the order can always be changed; getting your ideas down is the primary goal.

First Draft

Once you've established your purpose and decided on the points you would like to include, you're ready to begin writing your first draft. For your own well-being, don't try to perfect the first draft while you're writing it. Don't attempt to write, edit, and revise each sentence and paragraph as you proceed. This will only cause frustration and, most likely, will trigger writer's block. For the time being, you can simply fill in the paragraphs indicated by your outline.

Revising/Editing

Revision requires you to look at your essay as a member of your audience. Your concern at this point is the overall message conveyed by your essay, or the “big picture.”

During revision, you need to ask yourself several questions.

- Are my purpose and meaning clear? If not, you may need to reorganize your topics or take a different approach to your essay as a whole.
- Are there sections of the essay that don’t contribute to my established purpose? If so, delete those sections.
- Are there sections of the essay that require more information to be clear? If so, add more information as needed.
- Are there sections of the essay that should be moved for the sake of clarification? If so, try to determine where the information will make the most sense.
- Are there concepts/ideas that could be combined? If so, you may have to combine concepts/ideas into single paragraphs. Remember details within a paragraph should support the paragraph’s main idea or topic sentence. You’re goal is to give the reader a clear and concise explanation.

During editing, your goal is to establish a clear, concise writing style. Your focus should be on grammar, sentence structure, word usage, punctuation, and spelling. Here are some suggestions to use during this stage:

- Vary sentence lengths.
- Look for and delete unnecessary words.
- Eliminate irrelevant information.
- Get rid of clichés.
- Use specific, concrete words.
- Replace generalities with specifics.
- Change negative messages to positive ones.
- Check and correct grammar usage.

You may have to repeat this entire stage several times. In fact, you can continue to repeat these checks until you're completely satisfied with what you've produced.

Proofreading

In this stage, you'll clean up your writing to make it presentable to the audience. Since typographical errors, as well as errors in spelling and punctuation, can interfere with the clarity of your essay, you must eliminate them. Your final draft should be as close to perfection as possible.

During this stage check for:

- Consistent paragraph indentation
- Typographical and spelling errors
- Correct punctuation
- Correct capitalization
- Grammar errors
- Confused words, such as homonyms and homophones
- Repeated words, sentences, and lines
- Skipped lines, sentences, and paragraphs

While they're not foolproof, spell-check and grammar-check programs will help you to locate possible problems. Keep in mind, however, that these programs aren't designed to actually "read" your essay and can't discern between meanings for different words. If you have a word that's spelled correctly, the spell-check feature won't highlight it, even if it's the incorrect word for that particular sentence. The same holds true for the grammar-check feature. Neither should be trusted; both should be used with caution *during* the proofreading process.

Presenting

Presenting is the final stage of the writing process and, for most students, the most exciting. During this stage, you'll submit your essay for grading. Before you "present" your essay, take a final run through the steps of the writing process to ensure that you haven't overlooked anything. Your goal is to make your final draft as perfect as possible.

RESOURCES: GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

You may certainly access your study units from Basic English and Practical English (available upon request if you have received transfer credits) to assist you with grammatical and mechanical questions. Also, there are many grammar resources available on the Internet. Below are a few sites that our instructors prefer to use for reference purposes.

Online Resources

A list of helpful topics from

Daily Grammar at <http://www.dailygrammar.com/archive.shtml>

Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* from <http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html>

English rules from *The Blue Book of Grammar and Mechanics* at
http://www.grammarbook.com/english_rules.asp

General Writing Resources from *Purdue University's Online Writing Lab* at
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/>.

REVIEW: AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

All work submitted to Penn Foster High School for grading must be *entirely* original.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, to plagiarize is “(a) to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own; to use (another’s production) without crediting the source; (b) to commit literary theft; to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.” While these definitions may seem harsh, plagiarism is a very serious offense, and harsh punishment may result from commission of this act.

Blatant, direct copying of another’s words is plagiarism, but paraphrasing another’s ideas is plagiarism as well. Plagiarism is the theft of words *or* ideas, often both. If you haven’t constructed the logic of your essay by yourself, if you have “borrowed” wording that you feel is well-done, or if you’re using another writer’s words and/or ideas to create your own work, you’re likely committing plagiarism. The most surefire way to avoid plagiarism is to start from scratch using the writing process and, as tempting as it is, avoid doing any type of research or seeking out “examples” of how a personal essay should be written. Simply follow the directions in the assignment and rely on your instructors to answer your questions.



This video clip provides information on specific types of plagiarism

10 Types of Plagiarism:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EF5eFeJMpIA>

If the direct link fails to work, please copy and paste the title and link into the search bar on youtube.com.

If any portion of your writing uses ideas, phrasing, or wording from a source other than your own experience, you'll earn a failing grade of 1% for the exam.

When a Penn Foster High School exam is found to be plagiarized, the followings steps are taken:

- The exam in question is awarded a grade of 1%.
- Upon posting of the grade, the student gains access to an instructor feedback file which indicates where the exam content was found, provides an explanation of plagiarism, and a warning regarding possible disciplinary action.
- The student is *required* to complete the retake assignment.

Please refer to the section on “Academic Integrity” in the Penn Foster High School Student Catalog for more information.

ESSENTIALS: FORMATTING YOUR ESSAY

- Please be sure to include your name, student number, and exam number on the very first page of your essay. You may include this information in a header if you wish to do so.
- Using Microsoft Word, type your paper; it must be submitted in .doc, .docx, or .rtf format for grading purposes.
- Use double-spacing, standard one-inch margins, and a font no larger than the equivalent of Times New Roman 12.
- Your final draft should contain between 750 and 2,500 words.
- Please save your document using your student number, the appropriate exam number, and your last name, all connected by underscore symbols. For example, if John Smith's student number is 23456789 and he has completed exam 007127, he would save the file as 23456789_007127_Smith.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE SUBMITTING

Ask yourself all of the following questions before you even consider submitting your essay for grading. *If your answer to even one of these questions is no, then you still have some work to do.*

- Does my introduction attempt to “hook” the reader?
- Does my essay have a clear and specific thesis statement?
- Does my essay accurately tell my story?
- Does my essay indicate *why* I’m telling my story?
- Have I described *only* my own experiences?
- Have I used the first-person point of view (the pronoun “I”) throughout the essay?
- Have I clearly indicated where paragraphs begin and end?
- Does each of my paragraphs support my thesis statement?
- Does my conclusion summarize and give closure to my essay?
- Have I effectively proofread my essay?
- Have I met the length requirement?
- Is my essay formatted according to the instructions?

If you have answered *yes* to every question, you’re ready to submit!

Submitting Your Exam

1. Log on to the Student Portal.
2. Click on **Take Exam** next to the assignment you’ve completed.
3. Be sure to save your work.

4. Attach your file as follows:
 - a. Click on the **Browse** box.
 - b. Locate the file you wish to attach.
 - c. Double-click on the file.
 - d. Click on **Upload File**.
5. Click on **Submit Files**.

SUMMARY

You've received your first writing assignment for your Written Communication course in its entirety, as well as the information needed to complete that assignment!

You've learned what a personal narrative is, as well as what first-person point of view is. Several different topics have been offered, in the event that you can't think of anything to write about, any and all of which have the potential to lead to a quality personal narrative.

You've learned that the introduction, the body, the conclusion, and voice are essential parts of any essay. You've reviewed the steps of the writing process, as well as the guidelines for plagiarism. You've received resources to help you ensure mastery of grammar and mechanics. Finally, you've learned the rules for formatting a Penn Foster High School essay exam and been given questions to ask yourself about your document before submitting it for grading.

If you haven't already done so, it's time to start writing!

GRADING RUBRIC: EXAM 007127	Exemplary	Proficient	Fair	Poor	Not Shown
Introduction (10 points): Establishes a specific topic and approach and sets an appropriate tone/mood for the rest of the personal narrative. The author engages the reader and creates interest. There's a clear, concise thesis statement that declares the point of the paper.	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-1	0
Coherence and Unity (25 points): Ideas flow clearly and logically as the personal narrative is developed. Each paragraph contains one main idea (with enough detail to develop that idea clearly and logically) and a connection to the ideas that precede and follow it. The essay has one introductory paragraph, one concluding paragraph, and body paragraphs. Clear transitions are present between sentences as well as between paragraphs. The author remains focused on the topic.	25-22	21-18	17-14	13-1	0
Support for Ideas (20 points): Adequate detail and accurate support are provided for each idea introduced. Ideas are introduced in topic sentences in each paragraph. Specific, accurate, and relevant examples are used to show meaning. The author doesn't make blanket claims without support.	20-18	17-14	13-10	9-1	0
Sentence Structure (10 points): Sentences are varied in both structure and length. Sentences are complete, expressive, clear, and to the point. No run-on sentences or fragments are included.	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-1	0
Spelling and Word Choice (10 points): Personal narrative is free of spelling errors. Appropriate language is chosen for each situation, fitting the mood/tone set in the introduction. Clarity isn't inhibited by word choice complements.	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-1	0
Punctuation (10 points): Personal narrative is free of errors such as comma splices, misplaced commas, and inappropriate end punctuation. All punctuation is used correctly so as not to interfere with comprehension.	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-1	0
Grammar (10 points): The author utilizes correct and consistent verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, clear pronoun-antecedent agreement, and so on. Grammar errors don't interfere with comprehension.	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-1	0
Conclusion (5 points): Conclusion provides adequate closure by reinforcing the meaning/significance established in the introduction. The author effectively wraps the personal narrative.	5	4	3-2	1	0
Totals					