Narrative essays need to tell a story, and they need to recreate the experience in that story for the reader, in order for the reader to understand the point, or thesis. Since you are telling a story it does need to have a beginning, middle and an end, however you only want to use the details that help you prove your thesis, by recreating the moments for the reader. Description is very important because you are describing the experience for the reader so that they can try to relive it through your words. It should include many sensory details that help the reader live in the moments you are telling them about. It should appeal to the senses (sight/sound/taste/touch/smell) and use vivid, descriptive vocabulary.

Step by step guide to writing the narrative essay

1. **Pick an appropriate story idea**-
   1. Your idea needs to be:
      1. Interesting
      2. lend itself to description so it can be developed with many sensory details
      3. narrow enough to be developed in just a few paragraphs- (around 2 pages of writing)
      4. able to convey your point (thesis)
2. **Narrowing down your story** idea -Narrowing down your story idea is of critical importance to a narrative essay. Read the following example to see how this thought process works.

Let’s say your original story idea was to write about a car wreck you were in.

***Original story idea***- A car wreck

This is too general for a narrative essay so you would need to narrow that to make it more specific.

***Narrowed story idea***- When my Honda was hit by a Jeep Cherokee

This is closer but the idea could be narrowed many times until it is right for the essay.

***Story idea narrowed again-*** The instant of impact between my Honda and a Jeep Cherokee

***Story idea narrowed even more-*** What happened to me at the moment of impact between my Honda and a Jeep Cherokee

1. **Developing your thesis statement**-At this point you have a story idea that you can write about in your narrative essay. However you now need to ask yourself- What is the point of my essay going to be? What am I going to be trying to prove with my story? In order to do this you will need to ask yourself questions like: What changed in me when I had the experience? What did I learn? What was memorable? What was my take-away from that experience?

***Thesis statement example***: At the moment of impact between my Honda and a Jeep Cherokee I learned the true fragility of life.

1. **Outline your narrative essay**- All stories have a beginning, middle and an end. You will need to outline your essay around these three parts. Think of it as 3 scenes that get you from the beginning, to the most exciting piece and finally to the end where you make your conclusion or thesis.
2. **Select Descriptive Images for each part**- Choose descriptive images for the beginning, middle and end of the essay. Think of these questions for each part.
   1. What do you remember seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, touching?
   2. What movements were taking place around you?
   3. What were you feeling?

For example-

***Beginning***- (what do you remember from when it started) maybe it was raining hard, you had been driving for hours and your eyes were bone dry even though it was soggy outside-maybe you remember that your friend was snoring in the seat beside you

***Middle***- (as the climax is taking place)- screech of brakes, shrieking, blinding lights, car spinning out of control, sense of panic

***End***-(When did you come to your realization? How were you feeling? ) everything in slow motion, realizing you were ok, feeling grateful