

Essay 1: The Personal Essay/Narrative

Personal Essays are one of the major modes of essays available to all writers. Their purposes vary, but they are always centered on a writer's exploration of her or his own experiences. Narrative essays use a story to make their points. Writers often use their experiences to craft a story that explains their point of view to a reader.

Assignment:

For your first essay, you will write a personal, narrative essay. The essay should be written in the first person (using "I") and should draw solely on your own experience for examples. No outside research is necessary for this paper.

Write a coherent, concise essay of about 3 pages (must be more than 2; should not be more than 5) responding to the following prompt, taken from *The Bedford Reader*:

- Harold Taw wrote his essay "Finding Prosperity by Feeding Monkeys" for *This I Believe*, a National Public Radio series in which individuals speak of the principles by which they live. Write your own belief essay about a specific value or belief that you try to live by. Like Taw, make your philosophy concrete by telling a story that shows it in action. Visit <http://thisibelieve.org> for examples. This essay should answer the question, ***What do you believe?***

This doesn't have to be an essay about every belief you have, or even about your most core beliefs. Rather, think of one belief you hold that could be easily explained to others – something that's rooted in a single experience, or something that you can easily show through telling a story. Some examples:

- Many of us have rituals surrounding events for which we need luck: wearing certain socks when our favorite teams play; always eating Froot Loops the day of a job interview; always saying "I love you," when getting off the phone with a family member. Some would call these superstitions. Others would say they show a belief in luck, or fortune, similar to Taw's experience. Do you indulge in any superstitions or small rituals? Why?

Formatting:

Your paper, when completed, should look very similar to the paper on p. 483 of your LB Brief. Your name, my name, our class (WR 121: MW 3:30), and the date should appear on four lines at the left of the first page. A title should be centered above the text. Pages should contain about 23 lines of text and should have 1 or 1.25-inch margins on all sides. Your last name and the page number should appear at the top right of every page. Paragraphs should be indented one-half inch. Everything should be double spaced. No extra returns or spaces should appear between paragraphs.

The essay will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. **Development:** The essay should tell a complete story, with ample examples, details, and description. The essay should be well thought-out and well presented. It should be insightful and complex. It absolutely should not be a rehash of what's available in the textbook, and it should appropriately consider its audience. This is a personal essay, but it is also an academic paper. Avoid unnecessary use of informal language and slang except as absolutely necessary to demonstrate an example.

2. **Organization:** The essay should flow well and use transitions between paragraphs. It should be told in an order that makes sense: chronologically or logically. Paragraphs should contain clear topic sentences. There should also be a clear introduction and a clear conclusion paragraph.

3. **Unity:** The essay should be clearly organized around a main thesis, or point. If you are confused about what a good thesis is, please review page 37 in *The Bedford Reader* for clarification.

4. **Mechanics:** The essay should make its point clearly, without distracting errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, formatting, or language. Never use 15 words when 5 will do. Do not use words for which you aren't confident of the meaning. Writers are highly encouraged to make use of their required grammar books and the resources available at the LBCC Writing Center early and often. The essay must also adhere to formatting guidelines as stated in the syllabus.

5. **Fulfillment of the assignment:** Essays that deviate wildly from the above or approved topics cannot receive a passing grade. Essays that fail to reach a minimum of two full pages of writing cannot receive a passing grade.

6. **Revision:** Any essay that doesn't show signs of revision and proofreading will not succeed. Signs of not proofreading include: switched words ("form" instead of "from"), missing words ("we went the beach"), random characters (), and text-speak ("we went 2 the beach" or ☺).

Deadlines:

Due in class for peer editing: _____. Bring **three** printed copies of your essay to class on that day.

I will direct a session of peer editing, which will provide you with feedback from which to make final edits and revisions. You will take these comments home with you after class and use them to make final tweaks to your essay.

The final essay and comments you received from others are due to me on _____. Your final submission will include: All three peer-edited copies of your paper; any additional drafts that you have corrected; and the final paper. These must be clipped or stapled together or held in a two-pocket folder for my review.