

Resources: The Memoir Group

Books about Memoir Writing:

Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life, by Anne Lamott

On Writing, a Memoir of the Craft, by Stephen King.

Notable Memoirs:

Gay Heartbreak and Triumph, by Steven Skelly – a collection of memoirs, including a writing by Patrick Hamilton

Life in the Jungle, by Leonard Woolf – the husband of Virginia Woolf, this novel focuses on his time in Ceylon

The Tender Bar: A Memoir, by J.R. Moehringer – recommended by Louise Farmer Smith -- https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/144977.The_Tender_Bar

What She Ate: Six Remarkable Women and the Food that Tells their Stories, by Laura Shapiro – more of a collection of short bios than memoirs – but the writer uses her passion about food to anchor the stories about the six women, including Eleanor Roosevelt, Eva Braun, and Dorothy Wordsworth -
- https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/32969710-what-she-ate?from_search=true&from_srp=true&qid=z8kNXU61a2&rank=1

Washington Post Magazine article re: capturing stories of life during the pandemic -- https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/how-people-are-writing-the-history-of-the-pandemic-through-everyday-journals/2021/03/04/6dd0524c-67fb-11eb-886d-5264d4ceb46d_story.html

Publishing Resources:

Emily Barosse, founder and CEO of Bold Story Press -- www.boldstory.com

Research Tools & Resources:

www.wunderground.com/history -- allows writers to research the weather conditions for a particular place at a particular time in history

<https://welcome.storyworth.com/> - allows stories from your life to be captured for loved ones.

The Narrative Arc includes:

Beginning

Intriguing and engaging opening sentence/paragraph.

Exposition

Set the scene

Provide Background

Introduce Characters

Show crises, conflict, and desire.

*Inciting Incident—The internal or external challenge/conflict/ obstacle(s) that instigate further actions, change, and transformations.

Middle Rising Action

Building Tension

Turning Point/Climax/Crescendo

Written in scenes and narrative.

Should use forms of dialogue

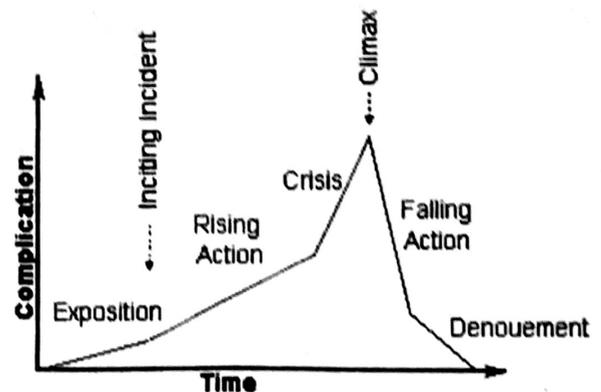
End

Falling Action—Time to slow things down

Written in scenes and narrative.

Should Use forms of dialogue.

Wrap Up: Conclusion, denouement (payoff at the end), lessons learned, and reflection.



Marilyn W. Smith, PhD
The WordSmith
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Sixteen Smart Guidelines for Writing Memoir

Avoid little annoying words...so, as, just, only, very, really, like, but, had, got, it.

Try not to begin sentences with *there was, there are, there were*.

Avoid beginning sentences with “I” or “it.”

Use strong adjectives and specific vocabulary.

Avoid repetitions of words or phrases, especially within the same sentence or paragraph. Vary your word choices.

Develop strong, interesting, catchy opening sentences and paragraphs that immediately engage the reader. Avoid beginning with data (dates, etc.), the word “I” or the word “It” if possible.

Show don’t tell; do not summarize for the reader.

Avoid the verb “to be” and forms of the verb “to be” such as *am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been, will have been, will be, should have been*, etc. Avoid verbs such as *put, give, get, have, had, went, and work*. Use precise, descriptive verbs.

Maintain consistent verb tense. Check for subject-verb agreement.

Include all 5 + 1 senses (sight, sound, taste, smell, touch, plus feeling/emotion).

Use direct, indirect, and internal dialogue; follow the proper dialogue conventions.

Zoom in on unique details.

Use Active voice; avoid Passive voice.

Avoid using who, what, when, where, why, and how as nouns. Find the noun you need.

For stories (fiction or memoir) follow the path of the Narrative Arc.

Marilyn W. Smith, Ph.D.

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DC Writers' Affinity Group
Meeting December 16, 2021

As mentioned by Sam Horn "No emotion in the writer, no emotion in the reader."

For this meeting the following resources were used to research emotion in writing.

- The author of *Fearless Writing*, **William Kenower** is chief editor of *Author Magazine*. In this book he suggests, "When writing, pay attention to how you feel. Readers care what it feels like when something is happening. Feel first, write second."
- **Laura Oliver** is an instructor at *The Writer's Center* in Bethesda. In her book *The Story Within* she states "The only way to convince a reader of anything is let him experience the stimuli and draw his own conclusion. If you want the reader to know your character is worried, ask what does worry look like? Perhaps you would write, "John bit his lip, but he could not keep his knee from jiggling." If you let the reader figure it out without telling him, he is engaged."
- According the website for **Clearsight Books** "Emotion creates a connection between you and the reader. To have an impact on your reader, your writing must convey emotion. <https://clearsightbooks.com/emotion-in-writing-do-you-need-it/>
This site lists FIVE WAYS TO ADD EMOTION:
 1. **Move from abstract to concrete.** Use sensory details.
 - EXAMPLE: I miss my mother - versus - I love to wear Mom's silk scarf; a hint of her perfume lingers, stirring memories of her.
 2. **Put contrasting emotions together** (highs/lows or good/bad)
 - EXAMPLE: As our boat passed by the breakwater, the shelter of the peaceful harbor vanished and rolling ocean waves teased my lunch toward a second coming.
 3. **Use your words to increase or decrease energy**
 - EXAMPLE: The celebration for this milestone launch did not disappoint. The crowd cheered as billows of smoke marked the historic liftoff. Moments later, twisted trails of smoke. The rocket gone. Blacken debris fell. No parachutes. Silence.
 4. **Include sensitive topics:** It reinforces your human connection to the reader.
 - EXAMPLE: At the Veterans home I escorted my dad - a former pilot, to his room. He stopped. His eyes wide, looking distant with fear. "Why can't I find my room?"
 5. **Pay attention to your craft.** Edit your work for sentence length and word choice (tepid vs warm; strolled vs walked slowly).
 - Quotes from authors:
 - Write your first draft with your heart; rewrite with your head – Mike Rich
 - It's perfectly okay to write garbage as long as you edit brilliantly C. J. Cherrih
- For a meeting in January, keep these tips in mind and **write about an emotionally charged event in your life.**