

Writing About Life Skills: A 3–5 Paragraph Personal Narrative

Focus Question

“What is an important life skill you’ve learned?”

(The skill may have been learned in the learner’s home country or since coming to the U.S.)

Learning Objectives

By the end of the lesson, the student will be able to:

1. Write a clear **3–5 paragraph personal narrative** describing an important life skill they have learned.
2. Use **advanced vocabulary** related to life skills (e.g., perseverance, adaptability, responsibility).
3. Organize writing with a clear **introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion**.
4. Explain **how the skill was learned, why it is important, and how it is used today**.
5. Revise writing for **clarity, coherence, and appropriate tone**.

Target Vocabulary: Life Skills

Core Life Skill Vocabulary

- perseverance
- adaptability
- independence
- responsibility
- resilience
- self-discipline
- time management
- communication
- problem-solving
- critical thinking

Academic / Reflective Language

- as a result
- over time
- initially
- eventually
- this experience taught me...
- one important lesson I learned was...
- this skill continues to help me...

(Tutor selects 6–8 words based on learner proficiency.)

Materials Needed

- Paper or notebook (or computer, if available)
- Pen/pencil
- Vocabulary list (provided above)
- Graphic organizer or outline (intro–body–conclusion)
- Sample paragraph or model outline (optional)

Warm-Up Activity

Life Skills Brainstorm & Discussion

1. Tutor asks:
 - “What are some skills adults need to succeed in life?”
 - “Which skills are most important when moving to a new country?”
2. Tutor writes learner responses and introduces **new vocabulary** where appropriate.
3. Learner chooses **one life skill** they feel strongly about.

Follow-up questions (oral):

- Where did you learn this skill?
- Who or what helped you learn it?
- Why is it important now?

New Lesson: Writing a Personal Narrative

Structure of a 3–5 Paragraph Story

Paragraph 1 – Introduction

- Introduce the life skill
- Give brief background (where/when learned)
- State why the skill is important

Paragraphs 2–4 – Body

- Describe a specific experience or challenge
- Explain how the skill was learned or developed
- Show growth or change over time
- Use examples and details

Final Paragraph – Conclusion

- Reflect on why the skill still matters
- Explain how it helps in daily life or future goals

Tutor Modeling (Optional)

Tutor models:

- Topic sentences
- Transitions (e.g., “At first...,” “Over time...,” “Because of this experience...”)
- Reflection language

Guided Practice Activity

Step 1: Planning with an Organizer

Learner completes a brief outline:

- Life skill chosen
- One key experience
- Challenge faced
- Lesson learned
- How the skill is used today

Tutor asks guiding questions and supports vocabulary use.

Step 2: Sentence-Level Practice

Learner practices:

- One strong topic sentence
- One reflective sentence using target vocabulary

Independent Writing & Assessment

Writing Task

Learner writes a **3–5 paragraph narrative** answering the focus question.

Tutor Assessment (Formative)

Tutor checks for:

- Clear organization
- Appropriate use of life skill vocabulary
- Logical flow and transitions
- Depth of reflection (not just events, but meaning)

Tutor gives **oral or written feedback**, focusing on:

- Content first (ideas, clarity)
- Language second (word choice, grammar)

Closure Activity

Reflection & Discussion

Tutor asks:

- “What was easy about writing this story?”
- “What was challenging?”
- “Which vocabulary words do you feel more confident using now?”

Extension (Optional Homework)

- Revise the full story
- Add one paragraph connecting the skill to future goals
- Prepare to share the story orally in the next session

Tutor Notes

- Encourage **depth and reflection**, not perfection
- Allow flexibility in paragraph length
- Prioritize **meaningful communication** over minor errors
- Adjust pacing to learner confidence and fluency

Outline

Personal Narrative: An Important Life Skill I've Learned

Paragraph 1 – Introduction

Life Skill: _____

- Where did you learn this skill?

- When did you learn it?

- Why is this skill important to you?

Introductory Topic Sentence:

Paragraph 2 – Background / Challenge

Describe the situation or challenge that required this skill.

- What was happening at the time?

- What problem or difficulty did you face?

Key Vocabulary to Use:

Paragraph 3 – Learning the Skill

Explain how you developed or learned this skill.

- What actions did you take?

- Who or what helped you?

- What did you learn from the experience?

Transition Phrase (e.g., “Over time...”, “As a result...”):

Paragraph 4 (Optional) – Growth or Change

Explain how you changed because of this experience.

- How were you different before and after?

- What did this experience teach you about yourself?

Paragraph 5 – Conclusion & Reflection

Reflect on why this skill still matters today.

- How do you use this skill now?

- How will it help you in the future?

Concluding Sentence:

Revision Checklist

Organization & Structure

- My story has **3–5 clear paragraphs**
- Each paragraph focuses on **one main idea**
- My introduction clearly names the life skill
- My conclusion reflects on why the skill is important now

Content & Development

- I describe a **specific experience**, not just general ideas
- I explain **how I learned the skill**, not only what happened
- I show **growth, change, or learning**
- My ideas are clear and detailed

Vocabulary & Language Use

- I use **life skill vocabulary** correctly
- I use **transition words** (e.g., initially, eventually, as a result)
- My word choices are clear and appropriate for an adult audience

Grammar & Clarity

- My sentences are complete and easy to understand
- Verb tenses are consistent and accurate
- Pronouns clearly refer to the correct person or idea
- Spelling and punctuation do not interfere with meaning

Final Check

- I reread my story out loud
- I made changes based on tutor feedback
- I feel confident sharing this story with someone else