

DEVELOPMENT



SHOW AND TELL

Whereas the **thesis and topic sentences** of a paper **tell** the reader the writer's opinion and the conclusions he/she has come to, the **development shows** the reader how the writer arrived at these conclusions. Development makes up the bulk of a paper; without development, a paper is unconvincing and, in most cases, pure B.S.

Development refers to all **factual evidence** a writer brings in to back up his/her points. Depending on the type of assignment, this evidence can consist of personal experience (the writer's or the experience of somebody the writer knows or has heard/read about), information found through research (print and online sources), information found through primary research (experiments, field studies), quotes and paraphrases from literary texts, and others.

Here are some examples of professional writers using different strategies to develop their points:

In the following paragraph, the writer uses **exemplification** (a series of example, in this case personal examples) to support her point that she grew up "unusual":

The fact is, I grew up ugly—no, worse than that, I grew up *unusual*, that unforgivable sin among youth. We lived in Alaska, where, despite what you might have heard about the Rugged Individualist, teenagers still adhere to the universal rules of conformity: if Popular Patty wears contact lenses, then you will by gum get contacts too, or else pocket those glasses and pray you can distinguish the girls' bathroom door from the boys'. The bad news was that I had only one eye, having lost the other in a dog attack at age seven; so although contacts, at half the two-eyed price, were easy to talk my parents into, I was still left with an eye patch and many facial scars, signs as gaudy as neon, telling everyone, "Here is a girl who is Not Like You." And Not Like Them, remember, was equivalent to Not from This Dimension, only half (maybe one third) as interesting.

-Natalie Kusz, "Ring Leader"

Narratives are simply stories writers tell to illustrate and support their points; in many cases, personal examples, take the form of brief narratives. Because we have listened to and told stories ever since we were children, narration comes naturally to most writers. Writers can choose between telling their own stories or those of others; they can integrate direct speech into their stories; they can use one long story in an essay or a collection of brief anecdotes, as their subjects demand.

Afflicted by the general shame of having a body at all, and the specific shame of having one weakened and misshapen by disease, I ought not to be able to hold my head up in public. And yet I've gotten into the habit of holding my head up in public, sometimes under excruciating circumstances. Recently, for instance, I had to give a reading at the University of Arizona. Having smashed three of my front teeth in a fall into the concrete floor of my screened porch, I was in the process of getting them crowned, and the temporary crowns flew out during dinner right before the reading. What to do? I wanted, of course, to rush home and hide till the dental office opened the next morning. But I couldn't very well break my word at this last moment. So, looking like Hansel and Gretel's witch, and lisping worse than the Wife of Bath, I got up on stage and read. Somehow, over the years, I've learned how to set shame aside and do what I have to do.

–Nancy Mairs, “Carnal Acts”

Description paints a picture in words for the reader, a picture of a person, a place, a thing, or a process. As with narration, description never appears for its own sake: it is always part of a larger point a writer is trying to make. Descriptive writers share a common goal: to paint a clear, precise picture for the reader, to make the reader a secondary eye-witness to what the writer has observed first hand.

Wilson sat by the patient in what looked like a barber's chair, manipulating a surgical microscope with a foot pedal. In his left hand he wielded a tiny suction tube, which removed excess blood. In his right he held a series of instruments in steady alternation: Cloward elevator, Penfield No. 2, Cloward rongeur, Fulton rongeur, conchatome, Hardy dissector, Kurze scissors, and so on. He worked quickly, with no wasted motion. Through the microscope, the tumor looked like a piece of lobster flesh, white and fibrous. He removed the middle of it, exposing the pituitary underneath. Then he took a ring curette--a long instrument with a circular scalpel perpendicular to the handle--and ran it lightly across the surface of the gland, peeling the tumor away as he did so.

–Malcolm Gladwell, “The Physical Genius”