

Using Anecdotes in Formal Writing



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An **anecdote** is a brief story used to make a larger point. Anecdotes can add a storytelling touch to your explanatory and persuasive writing—connecting your ideas to real life and real people. Here are some ways you can use anecdotes in the main parts of formal writing.

Beginning: To Introduce a Topic

In the ocean, two hungry dolphins pick up speed when they spot a school of flying fish. Sensing danger, the fish dart ahead. Soon they are cruising through the deep blue water at 20 miles an hour. As the dolphins get closer, the flying fish break through the surface, spread their fins like wings, and take off. Amateur explorers have called them “dragonflies of the deep,” but flying fish are most definitely fish.

Middle: To Support an Idea

The bleachers in the gym are unsafe. Some of the boards are cracked, which makes them hard to navigate. **Just last a week, a student was walking up the bleachers when she tripped on a crack, spilled her popcorn, and banged her**

wrists. She wasn't seriously hurt, but the next person who trips on the bleachers might not be so lucky.

Ending: To Make a Final Point

On the third turn of the 111th lap at Bellville Speedway, racer Keith Sweat lost control of his vehicle and slammed into a new shock-absorbant wall. After a caution flag cleared the track, Sweat unbuckled his new head and neck braces and walked out of his mangled race car without so much as a scratch or limp. At least for today, the new mandatory safety measures triggered by a year-old tragedy fulfilled their promise: to keep drivers safe.

Your Turn Identify the anecdotes in the following stories. Then choose one of the anecdotes and follow a similar pattern to create an anecdote about a topic of your choosing. (Click on the links to find each story.)

1. "Hang Up and Drive"

<http://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/studentmodels/hang-and-drive>

You see it every day, especially in freeway traffic. A car is weaving back and forth, speeding up then slowing down, or suddenly stopping. No, it's not a drunk driver. It's a cell-phone driver.

2. "Save the Elephants"

<http://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/studentmodels/save-elephants>

What should be done with a herd of marauding elephants? This was the problem recently confronting officials at Pilanesberg National Park in South Africa. A number of orphaned male elephants had been transported to the park in order to provide them with a safe and nurturing environment. However, this step to protect the elephant population soon threatened another endangered species.

The young elephants had entered musth, like puberty, a state of heightened hormonal activity and increased aggression. The elephants went on a killing spree, slaying almost 40 rhinoceros—including incredibly rare black rhinos. The park officials did not want to kill the young elephants, but they could not afford to have any more rhinos slaughtered.

Oddly enough, the solution to this disastrous situation was to bring more male elephants into the park. This time, however, they were full-grown bull elephants. In almost no time at all, a previously impossible hierarchy had been established, and the orphaned males fell right into place. No more rhino killings were reported.

3. "100 Years Old. 5 World Records."

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/22/sports/a-bolt-from-the-past-don-pellmann-at-100-is-still-breaking-records.html?_r=0

(Answers will vary.)

Don Pellmann had been at the San Diego Mesa College track for less than an hour Sunday morning and had already moved his lawn chair twice to remain in the shade, which was receding fast. By the time Pellmann set his fifth age-group world record, in the early afternoon, the temperature on the track was creeping toward 100, which also happens to be the birthday Pellmann recently celebrated.

- See more at

<http://k12.thoughtfullearning.com/minilesson/using-anecdotes-formal-writing>