



FIVE STEPS TO WRITING A GREAT ANECDOTE

Step 1: set the scene

PROMPT	SAMPLES	YOUR TURN
Where was the action taking place?	<i>It was a dark and stormy night...</i>	
Put yourself in the scene, using your senses	<i>The strangest thing happened to me last week! It was a dark and stormy night, and I was huddled under the dripping eaves of my house; damp, hungry, shivering, and cursing myself for the umpteenth time in the past half hour for leaving my keys at work.</i>	

Step 2: dive straight into the action

PROMPT	SAMPLES	YOUR TURN
Without any further preamble, say what happened, in order	<i>An old woman came walking down the dark street in all that rain, carrying an umbrella in one hand and holding an old-fashioned boom box on her shoulder like a 1980s rapper in the other. The radio was playing a talkback show. When she spotted me shivering out the front of the locked house, she walked up to me and fumbled in the pockets of her coat. Pulled out a battered-looking muesli bar and handed it to me, and shuffled off without a word. I ate the muesli bar!</i>	
<p>If you need them, use joining words to move your story along. Some ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * First of all * Suddenly * After that * Then * Next * Imagine my surprise * Meanwhile * Later * By the time I realised it * To top things off * Anyway * Finally 	<i>Suddenly, an old woman appeared on the dark street in all that rain, carrying an umbrella in one hand and holding an old-fashioned boom box on her shoulder, like a 1980s rapper, in the other. The radio was playing a talkback show. Then she spotted me shivering out the front of the locked house. Imagine my surprise when she walked up to me and began fumbling in the pockets of her coat. Next, she pulled out a battered-looking muesli bar and handed it to me. By the time I realised what she was doing, she had shuffled off without a word. Anyway, I ate the muesli bar!</i>	

Step 3: answer the 5-Ws

PROMPT	SAMPLES	YOUR TURN
<p>Aim to answer all five W-questions, in any order you please:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * WHAT happened? * WHO was involved? * WHERE did the action take place? * WHEN did it happen? * WHY did things unfold this way? 	<p><i>WHAT happened?</i> <i>A strange woman gave me a muesli bar</i></p> <p><i>WHO was involved?</i> <i>Me and the old lady</i></p> <p><i>WHERE did the action take place?</i> <i>Out the front of my house</i></p> <p><i>WHEN did it happen?</i> <i>At night time during a storm</i></p> <p><i>WHY did things unfold this way?</i> <i>Because I had left my keys at work and was locked out</i></p>	

Step 4: don't forget your feelings

PROMPT	SAMPLES	YOUR TURN
Keep returning to your emotions. How did you feel? What were your motivations? How do you feel about it all now?	<i>Suddenly, an old woman appeared on the dark street in all that rain, carrying an umbrella in one hand and holding an old-fashioned boom box on her shoulder, like a 1980s rapper, in the other. “Where did she come from?” I wondered, and felt goose-bumps rise on my arms. Her radio was playing a talkback show, and I comforted myself that I’d never heard of a ghost listening to taxi drivers rant about the government. Then she spotted me shivering out the front of the locked house. I caught my breath. Imagine my surprise when she walked up to me and began fumbling in the pockets of her coat. I didn’t know what to think, and honestly wasn’t sure whether to be afraid or not. Next, she pulled out a battered-looking muesli bar and handed it to me. By the time I realised what she was doing and tried to thank her, she had shuffled off without a word. Anyway, I’m not too proud to say I ate the muesli bar!</i>	

Step 5: tie up loose ends

PROMPT	SAMPLES	YOUR TURN
<p>Don't leave your reader hanging. If you have raised questions, try to answer them, at least in part. Maybe conclude by explaining how things are now that the action is over</p>	<p><i>It was a dark and stormy night, and I was huddled under the dripping eaves of my house; damp, hungry, shivering, and cursing myself for the umpteenth time in the past half hour for leaving my keys at work.</i></p> <p><i>Suddenly, an old woman appeared on the dark street in all that rain, carrying an umbrella in one hand and holding an old-fashioned boom box on her shoulder, like a 1980s rapper, in the other. "Where did she come from?" I wondered, and felt goose-bumps rise on my arms. Her radio was playing a talkback show, and I comforted myself that I'd never heard of a ghost listening to taxi drivers rant about the government. Then she spotted me shivering out the front of the locked house. I caught my breath. Imagine my surprise when she walked up to me and began fumbling in the pockets of her coat. I didn't know what to think, and honestly wasn't sure whether to be afraid or not. Next, she pulled out a battered-looking muesli bar and handed it to me. By the time I realised what she was doing and tried to thank her, she had shuffled off without a word. Anyway, I'm not too proud to say I ate the muesli bar!</i></p> <p><i>Thankfully, my flatmate arrived home not long after that and let me in, so I could get warm, dry, and eat the biggest bowl of mac 'n cheese you have ever seen. I never saw the old lady with the boom box again.</i></p>	