

Biography

What is a biography?

Unlike an 'autobiography', a biography is an expository text which provides facts and information on someone else and covers their whole lifespan. It is about telling the story of someone's life. A biography is usually told in chronological order but it can also be broken into sections or themes, for example: early life or literary works.

It is important to note that whilst non-fictional biographies are supported by research, it is also possible to a fictional biography. Both types include key dates and details from a person's life, however, in a fictional biography this can be made-up rather than supported by research. A common structural feature of biographies is the use of sub-headings which are used to separate key parts of information. Here are some things to consider when composing a biography:

Voice

Biographies are written dominantly in the third person (he, she, him, her, his, her, they, them, their) throughout the text.

Language & Grammar

Often biographies, particularly those on influential people, are framed by what they are famous for. For example, in a biography of Thomas Edison his inventions might provide the frame for the text. Biographies use more formal language throughout and as they reflect on past events or achievements they are told mainly in the past tense.

The sequencing of text is important here and transition cues such as *first, next, late, in and specific dates* are included to help the reader relate the events of the life together and create sequence.

It is possible to include some of your own assessment about a person and their impact in a particular field in a biography. However, this should be informed conclusions and judgements that you have made after synthesising and evaluating evidence from a variety of sources.

Structure and Organisation

There are two main ways to structure a biography either chronologically or thematically:

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduces the person who is the focus of the biography• Gives some key information about their life and possibly death• Can give an indication as to what they are famous for and why
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes lots of dates, locations and specific facts about the life studied

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be organised chronologically • Can also be organised thematically with important themes used to organise the information, for example 'Early inventions'. Chronological order is often still used in these mini-sections of text to explore the them throughout their life • Sub-headings can be used to organise the information
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluations of importance, impact or lasting legacy are usually explored in the conclusion • Broad statements are made about the journey of the life studied

Key information to include

Sometimes it is very difficult to know what to include and what to leave out of a biography. This is especially difficult when someone has lived for a long time or had many different achievements. Word length can also limit what can be included. As a guideline some things to include are:

- Date and place of birth and death
- Family information
- Major achievements
- Turning points in their life
- Education
- Colourful anecdote
- What made them significant

Audience is an important consideration here. Understanding your target audience, their needs and interests may also help you to tailor your writing to meet their needs.

Exemplar Years 7 – 9

Exemplar Years 10 – 12