

# Personal Reflection

**INTRODUCTION**

Interesting opener

Background information

Hint at meaning

**BODY**

Event 1

Narrative detail

Sensory details

Event 2

Thoughts/feelings

Sensory detail

Dialogue

**Music to My Ears**

I like football, but I'll have to admit that the band, not the team, has been the biggest attraction ever since I was a kid. The first marching band I saw was in a downtown homecoming parade. I was on my uncle's shoulders when the musicians struck up a fight song about half a block away. Kids started clapping along, the whole crowd got excited, and when the blue-and-gold uniforms came into view, I was hooked. I started whining for a horn that day. I remember thinking that I wouldn't let anything stop me from marching in a band. I never could have imagined that I would quit before I even got started.

When I was in middle school, I saw my first half-time show, and I became truly obsessed with the band. I wanted to be able to play that great music and wear a uniform and be applauded. After that show, I decided to start learning how to play the trumpet. I took music lessons and quickly began to make progress. No one had to make me go to lessons and practice. My confidence grew as the noisy blasts from my trumpet gradually blossomed into music.

When I got to high school, I auditioned for the band and was accepted. I couldn't wait until the first football game. I imagined myself proudly marching out onto the field wearing that blue-and-gold uniform. Playing in the music room with so many good musicians was terrific—we rattled the windows. After my first two weeks, the bandmaster complimented me on my musical talent. "It's great to have a

## Personal Reflection *continued*

Figurative detail

Event 3

Narrative detail

Figurative detail

Sensory details

Event 4

Narrative detail

Sensory details

Dialogue

Thoughts/feelings

Event 5

Thoughts/feelings

freshman with your skills," she said. My ego blew up like a balloon after that.

My success came to an abrupt halt, however, during the third week of practice. That's when we started drilling on the field. I stumbled along all right at first, just learning commands and some simple patterns. But then we had to play. From the sidelines, blowing a trumpet while marching seemed quite natural: left, right, stop, turn, whatever—in rhythm. On the field, it was different. I didn't feel like I had two left feet; I had three or four. I just couldn't stay in step. I couldn't even play very well because my music was bobbing up and down. It was cold, too, and frozen fingers didn't help.

It also didn't help that the other three freshmen got the hang of it quickly. Every day they looked a little better, and every day I was the same. Near the end of one practice, I got so nervous I turned completely opposite to direction and slammed into a senior. She dropped her trumpet, stopped cold, and shouted, "What is the matter with you? Wake up!" That's still my most embarrassing moment. Every single person was looking at me, and my face felt like fire.

I came back only one more day. Three weeks: that was my whole marching band career. I said it really didn't matter; I could still play my horn. I even pretended that being in band wasn't cool. But the truth is, I regret quitting to this day. I know people who made their best friends in band. They all had fun together, especially on bus trips. When they

## Personal Reflection *continued*

### CONCLUSION

Significance of experience

played at Mardi Gras, I sure couldn't say band wasn't cool.

It's not only what I missed, though, it's that I didn't have to miss it. Since then I've seen that most people have to struggle with something. Who's perfect at everything from the start? Besides that, you can ask for help. I could have asked the other freshman band members for help. I could have talked to the bandmaster. I could have simply kept at it. Maybe I would never have been perfect at drill, but still good enough for the band. Now I'll never know. What I do know is this: When you have a dream, don't let anything—especially your own insecurities—stop you from reaching your goal.

# Personal Reflection

## Definition

A **personal reflection** is an autobiographical narrative that reflects on an important experience in the author's life. A good personal reflection shares the meaning of a defining moment for the author.

Many personal reflections use the structure illustrated in the framework below. Print this framework and use it as a guide when you write your own personal reflection.

## Framework

## Directions and Explanations

**Introduction**

- Start with an interesting opener.
- Provide background information.
- Hint at the meaning of the experience.

**Capture your readers' interest** Your introduction should make readers want to keep reading your essay. Try starting with a thought-provoking question, an interesting quotation, or an anecdote.

**Provide background** Tell your readers what you were like before the experience.

**Drop a clue** Don't tell your readers the meaning of your experience at the beginning; just hint at the meaning. Give them clues about where you are going with your narrative.



**Body**

- Relate the events.
- Include details about people, places, thoughts, and feelings.

**Watch the clock** Tell your story in chronological order, starting with the first event. If you want to break the chronological order, try using flashbacks.

**Fill in the details** Provide details that show readers how your experience progressed. Describe how things looked and sounded, what people said, and what you thought and felt.



**Conclusion**

- Reflect on what the experience means to you.

**Drive it home** Wrap up your narrative by explaining the significance of your experience. Describe how the experience changed you, or tell your readers what you learned from it.