



Writing Personal Experience Stories

Why write from personal experience?

Tips for writing from personal experience

Keep a journal

Inventory and reflect on your life experiences

Essentials - and pitfalls - of good PE story writing

1. Clear focus

Pitfall - want to tell too much

2. Reader identification

Pitfall - story important to you but not relevant to your reader

3. Honesty

Pitfall - temptation to make yourself look better than you are

4. Use 4 C's of fiction

a. **Character** - contrasting & strongly motivated

Pitfall - don't lose the reader's sympathy

b. **Conflict** - credible problems & obstacles

Pitfalls - can't remember all the details or dialogue
inconsequential or unbelievable events

c. **Crisis** - black hole

Pitfall - too emotional or not emotional enough

d. Change/resolution

Pitfall - “I came to realize” or “suddenly I realized”

5. Structure - effective use of scenes

Pitfall - telling instead of showing

Drawing the Story

The Hinge Story

Mountain Top Plot

Dark Moment Plot

 **Flashbacks**

 **Transitions**

6. Dialogue used effectively

Pitfall - unnatural, stilted dialogue

7. Strong take-away

Pitfall - Failure to give reader something he can apply to his own life

HOMEWORK:

Use the writer’s check off list to evaluate a personal experience story you have written. If you’ve not yet written a PE story, ask the Lord to show you what He wants you to write and begin working on it.

Now many will hear of the glorious things he did for me.

Psalm 40:3