

# Using Flashbacks in Your Writing

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# Benefits of using flashbacks

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Fill in a character's backstory - aid character development

Allow for impactful opening

Build an understanding of place

To create contrast

Flashbacks can explain the current conflict

# How to use flashbacks

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Use verb tense shifts to move between the flashback and main narrative

- Past tense to past perfect (she had walked this path before)

Make sure it is clear that you are using a flashback

Can be linked to a character's memory

Keep them relevant

Tell the present story first

Use a trigger

# Example

The cold from outside knocked on the door, and let itself in under it, up through the floor boards, in through the slats of wood in the ceiling, consuming him, making him shiver, as he continued to stare at nothing.



His old blue eyes were hiding something. Memories. Memories of a young energetic boy who would go hunting with his father in the forest. Creeping silently, tip toeing through the bluebells and wild garlic. There! A deer in the distance. Perhaps a hundred metres or so, minding its own business. His father was very patient. He waited and waited. Bang! A shriek of pain from the poor animal in distress and then silence. His father always had a good shot. Never missed. Those were the old days he thought. The young version of himself all those years ago. Eager, young and ready to learn. And now here he was, in a cold cabin staring at the dark, the dark staring back.

# Using flashback in narrative and descriptive writing

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Short story – use of a flashback is fairly straightforward.

Description – can be used to create contrasts and develop ideas within the description. NB – ‘as suggested by’.





# Examples of Flashback Transitions

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“In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I’ve been turning over in my head ever since.”

“The backfiring of the bus sent the older man spiraling back to his youth. He could hear the guns firing and his comrades shouting. Adrenaline rushed through him, taking his breath. Leaning against the sign for the bus stop, he covered his ears trying to staunch the flow of memories.”

“The snow reminded her of when she last saw Daisy. The small imprints her paws made in its surface; the slight dragging of her right leg.”

Transition  
Ideas



