Purpose: Why share information? When we write with a primary purpose to inform, we share facts and details with our readers. One type of informative writing is instructions. If you've ever purchased a piece of furniture that required assembly, you've probably worked with a set of instructions. The instructions were likely designed by an engineer or technical writer with two goals: (1) to help you put together parts of an object, and (2) to persuade and assure you, through simple images and language, that the task will be easy.

Another example of informative writing is a brochure. You've probably seen these at your doctor's or dentist's office — brochures about how to control asthma or whiten your teeth. Consider the teeth whitening brochure: It may provide facts about various methods; however, it might also offer reasons for whitening, pricing information, and a photo of an attractive model with sparkling-white teeth. Is the material in the brochure presented only to inform, or is there another motive at work? Could the brochure creators also be trying to convince you to whiten your teeth?

When you read informative pieces, notice what else is going on. An author of a scientific report, for example, may present facts, but as a way to influence you to share an opinion or take an action.

Audience: How do we inform others? As writers, we need to know our audiences —who they are and what they want. For example, in Thibault's memo in Chapter 8, she included specific information that her assistant would need to accomplish the tasks. Additionally, she numbers the tasks so that her assistant knows what needs to happen first. Thibault uses very precise language and only includes pertinent information for her audience.

Rhetorical appeals: How do we use them to inform? When we write to inform, how do we get our audiences invested? Whether you're composing a research paper, fact sheet, or flowchart, you will use rhetorical appeals: ethos, logos, and pathos.

- *Ethos* — how you, as an author, are perceived by your audience — is extremely important when informing. That's why it's essential to draw on reliable sources of information in your research and to convey that knowledge with authority and as neutrally as possible. If your audience thinks you are unreliable, or that you have some unstated motive, you will not have established your ethos.
- *Logos* — or your use of logic as an author — is also significant. "How to" or instructional genres, such as recipes, make heavy use of logos. When cooks create recipes, they direct the reader in what to do, in a specific order. Chopping ingredients, mixing them, and cooking them must be presented to readers as logical steps.
- *Pathos* — your appeal to your readers' emotions — is generally not a priority when you're writing to inform. On the other hand, if you want to inform but also persuade your readers, you can appeal to their emotions by using humor, for example. Generally humor is appropriate for less formal informational genres, but you also have to consider your specific purposes and audiences.

Telling Stories

Constructing narratives is a universal impulse; stories help us make sense of our lives and connect with others. Regardless of the specific genres our stories take — and whether they're fact or fiction, comedies or tragedies, or something in between — they generally include real people or made-up characters, a setting, a conflict, and action.

In your composition course, you may be asked to write a literacy narrative: a story about how you learned to read and write. But there are other, less formal ways to share stories. For example, even a single page from a photo album or scrapbook suggests part of the story of someone's life.

An obituary is another narrative genre that tells a story. Writers of obituaries — sometimes the deceased himself or herself (some people write them well in advance), sometimes a friend or family member — tell the story of the deceased through key biographical details. A related genre, the eulogy, is a speech delivered at the funeral or memorial, usually written by friends or family members. Through eulogies, writers share stories about the deceased's life, character, and accomplishments. Even an epitaph, the inscription on a gravestone, can tell a story about a life.

Purpose: Why tell stories? As we worked on this book, we always began our sessions with an exchange of stories about what happened during the course of the day. Our students do this before class, talking about what happened in other classes or at their jobs. Stories help us reconnect with others.

Stories also help us chronicle events. A story can be true, such as a factual news report or an autobiography, or it can be made up, such as a short story, novel, or other work of fiction. Some stories change history, such as the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. Douglass's autobiography, which he published in 1845 while living in the North as an escaped slave, helped spark the abolitionist movement in the United States.