

# Anecdotes: Why They Matter

The Craft of Writing · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

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## Anecdotes

I feel you could know more about the benefit of anecdotes.

An anecdote is a small story.

Column 8 in The Sydney Morning Herald is full of anecdotes.

An anecdote is a short story relevant to your article.

It might be as short as:

I was so surprised the night Clint Eastwood walked in to the restaurant, I called him Mr Westwood and then dropped my tray on his foot. He laughed loudly. Two years later I met Clint again in my first acting role and he remembered my disaster and this time we both laughed.

The test of an anecdote is whether it is short and simple, and can be easily remembered and re-told fairly accurately.

An anecdote:

- enlivens an article
- humanises it
- brings an entertainment element to an article

You get anecdotes by asking questions like:

- "What's the saddest/happiest event in (so-and-so)?"
- "What's the strangest thing that's happened here?"
- "Can you tell me of some coincidences here?"
- "What funny or strange incidents do you most remember?"
- "What's your favourite story of those times that you enjoy re-telling?"

That kind of OPEN-ENDED question.

Once you get one anecdote from your interviewee, other anecdotes tumble out.

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