

Quick Tips: Writing an Engaging Story of Service



Sometimes, writing a story can feel daunting. To help you write a story that captures what you've ACCOMPLISHED in service as well as your EXPERIENCE in service, let's look at how you can **structure** your story:



QUICK TIPS:

- Try to limit your story to 350 words or less
- You should include quantitative (numeric) data

Introduction

Set the Scene: Introduce yourself, where you serve, what you do in service, and who you help in service.

The "Hook": In addition, consider starting your story off with a statement that draws the reader in to your story, such as a statistic that is relevant to the population you're serving and why help is needed.

My name is Ann, and I'm an AmeriCorps tutor serving at Aurora High School in Seattle through the Washington Service Corps. 15% of the school's student body are at least one grade level behind in literacy or math. In my position, I tutor and mentor students who are falling behind in these subjects, helping to get them on a path to graduate on time.

Body

Main Character: Tell the reader about a particular person, group of people or environmental beneficiary that you've helped that represents the broader population your position focuses on.

How did their situation or subject knowledge improve/increase from the help you provided?

Include data from your program. This helps illustrate the overall impact you're making.

One such student is Mike, who came to my after-school math club to get help in algebra. At that point, Mike was a grade level behind his classmates, and out of frustration, he had started to skip classes.

I tutored Mike every day, not only helping him in algebra, but also in getting him to open up and be more engaged. Over the course of many weeks of one-on-one sessions, Mike's grades started to improve, along with his self-confidence. I'm happy to report he's now up to grade level, and has "graduated" out of math club!

Mike's success story is just one example of the 20 students I've tutored so far that are back up to grade level, and on track to graduate with their classmates.

Reflection

Reflect on how serving in your AmeriCorps position and/or being a part of national service has impacted you.

My service in AmeriCorps has had a profound impact on me, helping to solidify my decision to become a teacher. I'm looking forward to what the rest of my term holds for me, and the students I consider myself fortunate to help.

More Tips: Writing an Engaging Story of Service



Here is a short list of points that your story should include:

- Start with a **succinct description of your position** (also known as an [elevator speech](#)).
- The **beneficiary (ies) you're serving** (e.g. students, elderly individuals, environmental habitat, etc.).
- The **impact upon a particular beneficiary or group of beneficiaries** that your service has had (e.g. if you tutor students in reading, have they improved their literacy rate over time).
- **Data that supports the impact** or intervention of your service on the beneficiary (e.g. if your story is about a particular student you've tutored in reading, the increase in reading grade levels, which reflects how much their literacy rate has improved).
- A **reflection** of how serving in AmeriCorps has impacted you.
- A **picture of you in WSC AmeriCorps gear** interacting with beneficiaries.
- A [WSC photo release](#) **IF** your picture includes individuals who are not other WSC/WRC members or elected officials.
- Use language that emphasizes your position as a national service volunteer. Use words like “**service**” instead of “work”, or “**AmeriCorps member**” instead of “employee”.

My name is (insert name) and I am an AmeriCorps tutor serving at Federal Way High School through the Washington Service Corps...It is my responsibility to help failing students achieve a passing grade.

One of my senior students, Tony, started the year with an F in his English class...Tony began to attend my after-school homework club at least twice a week for help with his homework...After three months of tutoring, Tony now has a B in the class...Tony is just one of the 130 students I have worked with this year who have demonstrated an improvement of at least one letter grade in English. By facilitating the after-school homework program, I am able to support at-risk students who would otherwise fall through the cracks.

This **abbreviated** story of service addresses all of the main criteria (*we understand your story will be much longer*). It shares where the member serves (Federal Way High School), their beneficiaries (failing students), how their service has helped (increased grades in English), and data that supports their service (130 students with improved grades). Fill in the gaps, add a photo of the member tutoring “Tony” with a photo release and it would be a great story!