

## Module 11. Warming Up Exercise

### How to Keep Your Story Short

I'm sure you know someone.

Perhaps the girl living around the corner.

You like her because she's friendly. She smiles a lot. And she's always enthusiastic.

But when she tries to tell you a simple story, you want her to shut up. Her endless *then-this-then-that* makes you want to ask her – what's your point? Her stream of pointless details makes you glance at your watch.

The biggest mistake in story telling is rambling on.

How can you avoid this mistake? And keep your readers engaged?

This warming-up exercise helps you get into the spirit of storytelling. You can write a random story, unconnected to your blog. You can describe something that happened to you today, or last year. It can be anything.

### Your warming up exercise:

Write a short story of about 100 words:

- Think of something that happened recently – something simple.
- Freewrite a first draft. Ramble on as much as you like.
- Leave your draft simmering overnight.
- Edit the next day, and reduce your word count by at least 30%. Keep only details that are relevant for telling your story.
- Pay attention to the sequence of events. Is the story moving on?
- Think about your reader's anticipation. Will they be curious to find out more?
- Post your edited story in the forum.

An example follows on the next page.

## Example of a first draft (rambling on)

It was an early morning. At the foot of the Pyrenees.

We were half-way our trip from Bordeaux to Burgos in Spain.

Today we were going to cycle up the Pyrenees.

But it was foggy. Was it going to rain?

Our B&B host warned us that it could be dangerous on the mountain. Should we delay for the day?

We decided to press ahead.

Our instructions were vague. And we immediately took the wrong road. Causing a half hour delay. Irritation.

Then we met two girls asking us whether it was safe to cycle up the Pyrenees. They weren't sure what to do.

While they stayed behind, we decided to go ahead.

It was cold. It was drizzling. And it was tougher than I had imagined.

The route was 27 km to the top. And after the first 15km or so, I had to stop after every 1km.

It felt like I would never get there.

But steady wins the race. And at about 1pm we reached the top.

1,057m high.

Without a view.

Because it was still foggy.

[179 words]

### Example of a second draft (edited and word count reduced by 30%)

Our B&B host had told us to wait a day.

Because cycling in the drizzle and fog could be dangerous.

But we were adamant. We wanted to cycle across the Pyrenees to Pamplona. We wanted to savor the tapas. We wanted to move on.

So, we set off.

The fog created a strange feeling of mystery, enveloping us. We heard the soft whisper of rain drops. We lost our sense of direction.

We got wet, and cold. Our legs were hurting, telling us to stop.

But up, and up, and up we went.

For twenty-seven long and sloooow kilometers.

And at the top?

The fog spoilt our view. Our pictures are blurry.

But we felt a great sense of achievement.

[120 words]