



Quick-Reference Photolisting Guide

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AdoptUSKids has worked with professionals around the country to develop guidance about writing effective narratives that protect children's privacy, safety, and dignity. You can find a wealth of resources on our website: professionals.adoptuskids.org.



Public vs. private narratives

Written narratives help prospective adoptive parents make an emotional connection with young people who need a family. They can be used to build a child's profile for a photolisting or other online recruitment, on a flyer distributed at adoption events, or in any number of other ways.

Public narratives

The ultimate goal of a public profile is to reach prospective adoptive parents and help them make an emotional connection with young people who need a family. To accomplish this goal, public narratives must present a positive depiction of the child that protects their safety, privacy, and dignity. Narratives should draw prospective parents in, rather than narrow the field.

Because public narratives can be viewed by anyone—birth family members, peers, and the child themselves—it is especially important to make sure the narrative is all positive. Narratives should never include any private information or share information that could disclose a child's location.

Read more about what to include in a public narrative: professionals.adoptuskids.org/information-to-include-when-writing-child-narratives/.

Private narratives

Prospective parents who have a home study and are seriously considering a child need more information to see if they can meet the child's needs. This can start to happen in the private narrative.

The private narrative provides brief information about a child's medical, educational, behavioral, and other issues. Providing this additional information helps ensure that families do not submit a home study for children whose needs they cannot meet, hopefully saving staff time and resources.

The private narrative is still not the right place for full disclosure, which happens later in the process through confidential communication with the family that has been selected as a possible adoptive placement. Items to save for confidential communication include details on medical needs or treatment, certain mental health diagnoses, and information about birth family history.

Find more information and examples of well-written private narratives on our website: professionals.adoptuskids.org/what-to-include-in-a-private-narrative.



Dos and don'ts for public narratives

✓ Do include:

- Preferred first name
- Positive personality traits and strengths
- Hobbies, interests, and favorite pastimes
- What they like about school and school successes
- Things that are important to them
- Answers to questions such as: What makes them laugh? What is their dream day like? What makes them proud?
- Ways they are connected to the community
- Information about cultural connections or languages they speak or use
- Dreams for the future
- Positive quotes from the child and others in their life
- Important family connections
- In profiles of siblings, how they interact with one another
- How a family might be a part of their life
- How to learn more



Nathan

Age: 15

State: Alaska

When Nathan tinkers with technology, generally something exciting occurs, such as the time he fashioned a light out of spare parts and a battery. This mechanically inclined, tech-

✗ Do not include:

- Identifying information
- Information related to abuse, neglect, maltreatment
- Medical information
- Behavioral challenges
- Potentially painful or embarrassing information
- Things that limit potential families
- Intellectual ability or educational challenges
- Anything negative, things the child isn't, doesn't do, or doesn't like
- Adoption assistance eligibility
- Status as legally free or not legally free

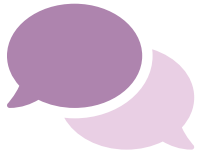


Engaging youth and caregivers

- Disclosure of sensitive or potentially identifying information about any birth family members or siblings not in foster care, including criminal history, mental health or medical details, geographic locations, immigration status, etc.
- Links or references to a young person’s personal YouTube channel, web pages, or social media pages
- Outdated information
- Long lists of chores or other activities that may make it seem like the child is going to be working rather than being a member of the family
- Current placement type (such as residential treatment, group home, or juvenile justice setting)
- Placement history, including number of placements in foster care or re-entry into care, or other information taken directly from the child’s case file regarding their placement history
- How long the child has been in foster care or how long they have been waiting for an adoptive family
- Information about why a foster family or relative is not interested in, or able to be, the child’s permanent placement
- References to adoption interruption, disruption, or dissolution

Getting interesting, accurate information from a child or sibling group is the most important part of creating a compelling waiting child narrative. Here are a few tips to help:

- ➔ Have someone the child or youth is comfortable with conduct the interview. If the recruiter or worker is new to the child, have a foster parent, mentor, or another important adult ask the questions. For children who are very young or who are nonverbal, ask the foster parent or caregiver for information.
- ➔ When working with older youth, be sure to engage them in the process. It is important to give them a voice in how they are represented (within the guidelines of being strength-based). For example, you might encourage them to record a video of themselves.
- ➔ Let older youth review their narratives, including the photo. Let them take their own photo if they’d like. Bottom line: the photolisting profile for an older youth should always get their stamp of approval!



Conducting an interview

Don't rush the interview. You may have to take time to let the child warm up to you or to the topic. Sometimes it's best to play games with the child, read together, take a walk, or visit their room and just observe before you ask questions. When you see the child getting excited about a book or a dog or their artwork, you begin to know what matters to them and can ask some related questions.

Remember that the best information will come from a conversation. When you ask about books, let the child think about their favorites and ask follow-up questions about why they like what they like. To keep the conversation going, you can name some of your most beloved books from your childhood.

If the youth is going to write all or part of their own narrative, you should still have a list of questions to help guide them in the process. They can review the list or you can ask questions and, once you hear their answers, make suggestions about what might be best to include in their profile. Another option is to ask them questions and have them dictate the information as they would like to share it.



Sample interview questions

Find a complete list of sample questions and writing tips at professionals.adoptuskids.org/narrative-writing-tips-and-sample-questions.

1. What's your favorite thing to do outdoors?
2. What do you like to do in your free time?
3. What are you proud of?
4. What activities do you participate in (choirs, plays, clubs)?
What activities would you like to try in the future?
5. Do you have a favorite author or book? What types of books do you like best?

6. What type of movies do you like? Is there a TV show you watch regularly?
7. What games (board, card, video, etc.) do you like to play?
8. Do you like to draw or do other arts and crafts? What are your favorite types and subjects?
9. What sports do you enjoy playing? Are there others you like to watch? Do you have a favorite team?
10. Do you sing, dance, or play an instrument?
11. Who are your favorite musicians or groups to listen to? Do you have a favorite song?
12. What was the best meal you ever had?
13. Do you cook or bake? What are your specialties?
14. What would you like people to know about you?
15. If you had three wishes, what would they be?
16. What makes you laugh? Who makes you laugh the most?
17. If you could visit any place on earth, where would you go? Why?
18. What do you do during vacations from school? What things would you like to do if you had the chance?



Writing tips



Try varying the structure within the narrative. Start one sentence with a quote from the child, and the next with that child's favorite hobbies. Some sentences may begin with what the child hopes to do with a new family, while others start with information about favorite subjects in school. Even if you have a fairly set outline for your agency's narratives, you can still make variations within the outline.

Make a list of the items you like and want to include in your narratives—details, stories, adjectives, quotes—and make a plan for how you can get them. Use and adapt the sample interview questions to gather more information.



Sample strengths-based public narratives



Monique: a child with special needs

Monique is a happy, engaging child. Her face lights up with a huge smile when people are around her. Her perky pigtailed really highlight this charming child's sunny personality. Being outside is one of the things that makes Monique really content, and you'll be sure to see a smile when you take a journey to the park. At home, easygoing Monique loves to be read to and enjoys watching the ceiling fan spin and spin in circles. If you can envision this smiley girl in your lap, listening to you read your favorite children's book, please inquire to learn more!



Nathan: a teen

When Nathan tinkers with technology, generally something exciting occurs, such as the time he fashioned a light out of spare parts and a battery. This mechanically inclined, tech-savvy teen loves taking things apart and putting them back together and has shown a natural ability to figure out any type of electronic device. In fact, his worker describes Nathan as "creative and imaginative in his ability to make things and build things." "Mr. Gadget" turns into "Mr. Fix-It" when repairing things

that are broken, which is another natural ability. Not surprisingly, Nathan's favorite subject in school is science, and he says he enjoys science experiments. This "Mr. Science" enjoys a good laugh too. "Nathan has a good sense of humor," says his worker, who adds that Nathan uses sarcasm to joke around and laugh with others. His foster parents describe Nathan as a kid who "cares about others and immediately wants to share whatever he has with others." Nathan also likes to cook, and his favorite dish is chicken alfredo with carrot cake for dessert. A family with pets would be ideal, says Nathan, who also likes motorcycles, fishing, and being outdoors. He hopes his family will help him pursue his many and varied interests!

Find examples of well-written public narratives on our website: professionals.adoptuskids.org/examples-of-well-written-public-narratives/.



Final check!

When you're done, review the narrative. Does it:

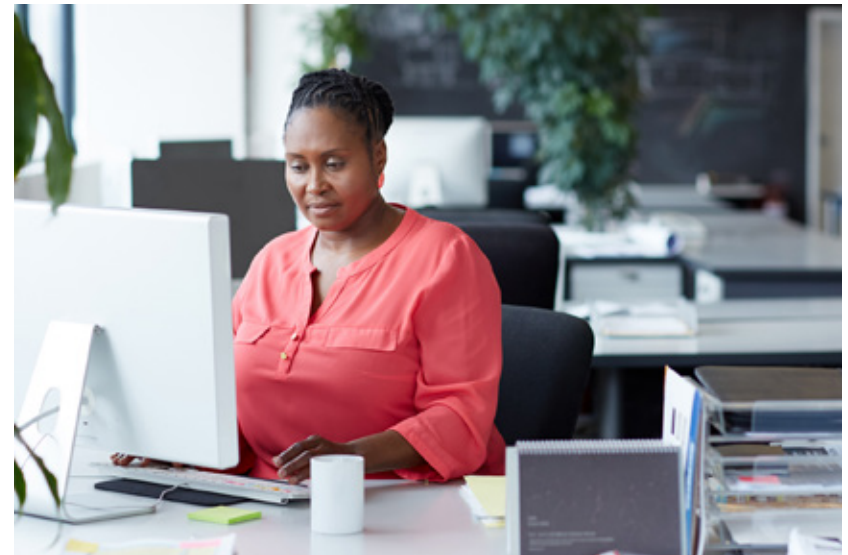
- Tell a story?
- Use positive adjectives?
- Have lots of interesting details?
- Have quotes from the child or their caregivers?
- Make you want to learn more about this person?

Also review it through the eyes of the featured young person. Is it something they would be proud of? Would they feel it gives a sense of who they are and what's important to them? Is there anything in the profile that a schoolmate might make fun of?

Keep an eye out for the word “but”—it's often a sign that something negative has or will be introduced. Rewriting with a positive spin and the word “and” can often make a powerful difference.

See our *Checklist for Public Narratives* for quick guidance on our website: professionals.adoptuskids.org/checklist-for-public-narratives/.

Contact us



AdoptUSKids offers free capacity-building services to all states, tribes, and territories to assist in their work to recruit, engage, develop, and support foster, adoptive, and kinship families. For more information on how we can help, or to request additional copies of this booklet at no cost to you, contact us at consultation@adoptuskids.org.



AdoptUSKids

Together we hold their future

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