Writing an Autobiographical Sketch (also called a vignette)

**Autobiography**
- It is a written account of a person's entire life or a part of it
- Uses the pronoun I
- Uses vivid, descriptive language to help the reader visualize or understand the events in the person's life
- Provides an *in-depth, lengthy account of multiple events or incidents* in the person’s life

**Autobiographical Sketch**
- It is a person's account of a **specific** event or incident that occurred in his or her life
- Uses the pronoun I
- Uses vivid, descriptive language to create sensory images in order to convey the scene
- Provides a brief, yet detailed account of a **single episode**

**Step One: Prewriting/Brainstorming Stage**
With a focus on sensory details, the prewriting process provides an opportunity for you to brainstorm about the specific incident or event in your life. This is a time when you attempt to recall vivid details about the scene in your life—details that you will use in the writing of your autobiographical sketch. Another consideration when prewriting is to streamline your focus so that you eliminate any information that is not important. Lastly, begin to organize your thoughts in an organized, sequential manner.

**Step Two: First Draft**
As in any well-written personal narrative, three elements are essential:
1. People (Who were involved in the event?)
2. Setting (Where and when did the incident/event occur?)
3. Action (What interesting/sad/humorous/scary/ordinary/significant, etc. action occurred?)

Break the subject down so that you can determine where information should be placed.
1. **The Beginning**: This is where the writer must first grab the reader’s attention by introducing the subject matter in a clear, creative way. The people involved and the setting should be described. Use specific details to help the reader visualize the opening section of the scene.
2. **The Middle**: Next, describe the main action of the scene or event. Good storytellers never tell everything. Instead, they focus attention on capturing the essence or moment of the scene. This is where specific details and imagery help the reader to experience the action. The personal voice and tone of the narrator should be revealed as this often helps the reader to understand the author’s experience.
3. **The Ending**: The ending should bring your sketch to a close, either by showing what you learned from the experience, or by sharing how you (and anyone else) felt after it was over.

**Step Three: Revision**
Revision means to look at your writing critically and determine the following:
1. Does the opening part effectively set the scene?
2. Do I express genuine feelings in the narrative? Does my natural voice come through in my word choice?
3. Do I capture the important sights, sounds, feelings that relate to my specific scene?
4. Is every detail in the sketch absolutely necessary? Get rid of the excess.
5. Does my sketch build in interest or excitement and make a point in the end?

**Step Four: Editing**
This is when you review for the effectiveness of your sentence structure. Finally, edit for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

**Step Five: Polished Final Draft**
You did it! Your final typed draft should reflect your **BEST** efforts in all the areas above. It should reflect your finest writing.