

AN INTRODUCTION TO DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

USING YOUR SENSES IN DESCRIPTION

Here's the idea A descriptive paragraph is a word picture. Through descriptions you are able to reveal a person, a scene, or an object - either real or imaginary. In order to write an effective description, you need to explore both the details and feelings related to your experience. Begin by selecting details that appeal to all of the senses - sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Select specific sensory words that will bring an experience to life.

THE DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH

A Descriptive Paragraph describes a person, place or thing as vividly as possible. It makes the reader see, hear, and sense everything that will bring the subject to life.

When you write descriptive paragraphs follow these basic rules:

1. Create an overall impression of the person, place or thing you are describing.
2. Use sensory details of sight, sound, taste, smell, colour, and touch as well as details of time, space and motion.
3. Use similes and metaphors to make your descriptions more interesting.
4. Use exact words whenever possible.

Examples of Descriptive Paragraphs

Here are five descriptive paragraphs written by students. All of them try to bring a particular experience to life by using details which will help us to see a picture in our minds. All of them use words which appeal to our senses.

Example 1 Skateboarding

You stand at the top of a lonely hill, six bright orange markers at the bottom. There is nothing but silence all around you. Your feet are plastered to the board and you can feel the muscles in your legs bulging to the surface of your skin.

Example 2 Hang Gliding

Hang gliding is jumping off the world and landing in freedom - just you coasting above the ocean with the salt-seasoned air blowing through your body. A sudden tingle and surge of electricity runs through your body like a charge of electricity. All of your senses are alert. The cries of the seagulls remind you of your freedom and the sense of challenge fills your soul. Man greets nature.

Example 3 Rush Hour in Winter

Linda climbed off the bus. A sharp blast of cold wind hit her face. She had never been downtown in rush hour in the winter before. Suddenly she felt as if she had just set foot on an alien planet. Beings rushed back and forth around her. Their whole bodies, even faces, were wrapped in wool and leather and fur. Orange street lights cast an unreal glare around her. The constant screech of cars, buses, trucks and taxis assaulted her ears. She stared into store windows filled with displays of robots, spaceships, rockets, and ninja turtles. Had her bus trip taken her to a nightmare world?

Example 4 Tyrannosaurus Rex (Ray Bradbury)

Out of the mist came Tyrannosaurus Rex. It came on great, oiled, resilient, striding legs. It towered thirty feet above all of the trees, a great evil god, folding its delicate watchmaker's claws close to its oily reptilian chest. Each lower leg was a piston, a thousand pounds of white bone, sunk in thick ropes of muscle, sheathed over in a gleam of pebbled skin like the mail of a terrible warrior. Each thigh was a ton of meat, ivory, and steel mesh. From the great breathing cage of the upper body, two delicate arms dangled out front, arms with hands which could pick up creatures and examine them like toys, while the snake neck coiled. And the head itself, a ton of sculptured stone, lifted easily upon the sky. Its eyes rolled, ostrich eggs, empty of all expression save hunger. Its mouth gaped, exposing a fence of teeth like daggers. It ran, its pelvic bones crushing aside trees and bushes, its taloned feet clawing damp earth, leaving prints six inches deep wherever it settled its weight. It ran with a gliding step, far too poised and balanced for its ten tons.

resilient: elastic; able to take shocks

sheathed: tightly fitted

pelvic: the heavy bones near the hips and spine

taloned: having claws or sharp nails on the feet

Example 5 The Lion

I was within twenty yards of the Elkington lion before I saw him. He lay sprawled in the morning sun, huge, black-maned, and gleaming with life. His tail moved slowly, stroking the rough grass like a knotted rope end. His body was sleek and easy, making a mould where he lay, a cool mould, that would be there when he had gone. He was not asleep; he was only idle. He was rusty-red, and soft, like a strokable cat.

From *West with the Night* by Beryl Markham

	SIGHT	SOUND	TOUCH	TASTE	SMELL
	the white smoke of the campfire rising	gentle waves slapping against the bow of our canoe	the smooth wood of the paddle in my hands	thinking about the delicate taste of fresh caught trout	a waft of coffee from the breakfast campfire
2					
3					
4					
5					

