

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING.

Key points:

- Write at least one side
- Write in sentences with full stops/capital letters.
- Use paragraphs (between three and six)
- Pay close attention to the verbs, adjectives and adverbs you use
- Try to write from memory (you will probably have been somewhere similar to the scene you have to describe)
- Treat the scene as if you have a zoom lens – focus on a close-up detail then zoom back out to observe the full scene again.
- Include authentic, believable details, including physical detail and snatches of dialogue (conversation)
- Describe, but do not tell a story
- Don't use 'I', use third person instead (he, she, the children, one woman etc)
- Focus on individuals in the scene (how they look, act, behave, speak etc.)

Remember:

A scene will change, it is not stuck in one fixed time, so comment on these changes (e.g. people might leave, others might appear).

Structuring your Description

Sentence Structure – if you vary your sentence structure you will gain extra marks. This means using a variety of **compound**, **complex** and **simple** sentences.

Simple Sentence – contains only one piece of information with only one **verb**. For example 'The cat sat on the mat'. Using simple sentences are a good way to emphasise or stress a particular example.

Compound Sentence – made up of two sentences that make sense on their own. These sentences are joined using the words '**and**', '**but**', '**or**'. For example 'My friend invited me to a party, **but** my parents didn't let me go.

Punctuation - You need to vary your punctuation in the description. This means including a variety of punctuation, not just commas and full-stops.

Semi-colons ; To separate two sentences that are closely linked in but make sense on their own. For example, ‘the crowd rose to their feet; they waited in anticipation’.

Colons : after a list or an explanation of something, ‘A variety of colours filled the room: intense oranges, sparkling white and deep blue’.

Exclamations ! Punctuation used to show excitement, surprise or shock. For example, ‘The dam has burst, run for your lives!’

Speech marks “ ” Punctuation marks that show when someone is speaking. For example, “boys! You better behave yourself” the mother shouted angrily.

TASK Read the following example and re-write it, putting in the correct punctuation.

Cabot Circus was awash with busy shoppers excited young children tired looking mums groups of teenagers huddled together chatting shop workers hurrying to get their lunch one child in particular was clinging tightly on his mother’s arm can we go here can we go there repeatedly

Paragraphs – Every time you describe a different person or a change in sense, use a different paragraph.

Adjectives, adverbs,

TASK find an appropriate adjective/adverb for the missing word

Adjective - adds more information to nouns. For example, ‘**pleasant, appetising** smells filled the **hot** canteen’.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) The _____ sandwich tasted _____ | delicious, satisfying, tasty |
| 2) _____ people barging into each other | angry, irritated, livid, |
| 3) A group of _____ teenagers misbehaving | silly, juvenile, childish, immature |
| 4) The room was hot and _____ | oppressive, sweaty, clammy, sticky |

Adverb – adds more information to a verb to describe the way the action is done. Adverbs usually end in **-ly**. For example, ‘the boy walked **briskly**’.

- 1) The young girl _____ chucked her pen across the room. **angrily, furiously, heatedly**
- 2) The man _____ ran towards the gate **quickly, hurriedly, rapidly**
- 3) The woman looked at the notice _____ **inquisitively, inquiringly, curiously**

Verbs - Describes an action (doing word). For example, ‘the boy **walked** across the room’. However, to make your description more interesting, think carefully about the verbs you use. ‘The boy **strolled** along the room’ sounds better than ‘the boy **walked** across the room’.

Use the following set of alternative verbs when you write a description at the end of this booklet:

- SAW – spotted, noticed, sighted
- SHOWED – gaped, yawned, glared
- COVERED – choked, blanketed, smothered
- WALKED – swaggered, strutted, sauntered
- WORKED – toiled, stumbled, struggled
- PULLED – dragged, tugged, yanked
- LOOKED – gazed, stared, peered
- COVERING – caking, coating, carpeting
- HANGING – dangling, drooping, trailing

Vocabulary Look closely at the start of this description of a **busy shopping centre**.

Each solitary person’s eyes are seductively glued to each window they pass, willing there to be a bright red ‘sale’ sign in the clear window of the best clothes shops. People barging into each other, reminiscent of a child’s first go of the dodgems at a fairground. The sweat of the angry women approaching can be seen, her face redder than a ‘sale’ sign and her forehead gleaming with sweat with the fluorescent lighting making it more obvious.

As the day passes, more shoppers flow through the tired doors like a herd of rampaging wildebeest on the plains of Africa. The alluring smell of cookies in the cookie shop drifts past the nose, a smell so powerful that it can be tasted. The feel of the best-selling CD in the hands of one man, hurriedly placing it in his rusty basket.....

TASK – Make a list of all of the words in this description that make it effective. Then look up in a dictionary what the words mean. Notice how the writer has thought carefully about the words they have used.

| Word | What does it mean? | <u>Why</u> is this word effective? <u>How</u> does it create an image? <u>What</u> does it suggest? |
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Simile and Metaphor – to make your description more interesting and effective, you might want to include a **simile** or a **metaphor**. However, you must make sure that you don't use too many!

Simile – This is a comparison of two things using **like** or **as** e.g. 'The crowd were **like** a herd of wildebeest'.

Metaphor – When you say something **is** something to get a clearer meaning e.g. 'she was a volcano waiting to explode with anger'.

TASK – make up a simile/metaphor for each of the following

1) An angry woman

Metaphor _____

Simile _____

2) A young girl laughing constantly

Metaphor _____

Simile _____

3) An impatient mother

Metaphor _____

Simile _____

Looking at individuals in the scene (in close, precise detail)

Whenever you are describing a scene, you must focus on the individuals who are in the scene. This means observing how the people **look, act (including character traits), behave and speak (including tone/pitch/sound of voice)**.

Look at the following examples. The first is basic; the second is more detailed because it considers how the girl **looks (including facial expressions), acts, behaves and speaks**.

1) *One young girl at the counter looked angry as she was being served.*

2) *One young girl was heavily made up with foundation. The foundation was so thick, it glowed under the florescent lights. The girl stood impatiently, tapping her foot on the floor. The tapping got quicker as she got more and more impatient. The tone of her voice sounded angry as she was finally served 'chips and peas, please!', she muttered quickly whilst raising her eyebrows.*

TASK Fill in the planning sheet for all of the descriptive details you could use.



Task 1: Describe the Academy canteen at lunch time.

SEE

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

HEAR

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

SMELL

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

TOUCH

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

TASTE

- 1
- 2
- 3

Close, precise detail

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Individuals in the scene

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Metaphor

- 1

Simile

- 1

Personification

- 1

4



Task 2: Describe the scene at a football ground on match night.

SEE

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Close, precise detail

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

HEAR

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

SMELL

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Individuals in the scene

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

TOUCH

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Metaphor

- 1

Simile

- 1

Personification

- 1

TASTE

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Now choose two of the following- using the same format to plan. When you have made a plan- write a detailed paragraph which incorporates the 5 senses in your description.

- Describe the scene at a fairground on a winter's night.
- Describe the scene during your morning break at school.
- Write a description of a market at a busy time.
- Describe the people in the queue at the checkout in a supermarket.
- Describe the scene at a busy tourist attraction. You could describe a theme park, a museum, a zoo or an historic site
- Describe the scene on a beach or in a park on a summer's day.
- Describe the scene at a busy bus station.
- Describe the scene in a large clothing store on the first day of the January sales.
- Describe the scene at a sporting or musical event