

Using Sensory Details in Writing

What are sensory details?

Sensory details are descriptive details involving the five senses – sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. These sensory details help readers to understand and connect with the writer’s experience by inviting the reader into the story. Readers can further understand and enjoy a text when the writer includes sensory details.

- **SIGHT:** What objects, shapes, spaces, or people do you see? What are colors do you see? Is it light or dark? Are the shapes and spaces different sizes?
- **SOUND:** What sounds do you hear? Is it loud or quiet? Who or what else might make sounds? If I drop, trip over, shake, or pick up an object, what sound might it make? What other things might create sounds? Is there dialogue?
- **SMELL:** What scents do you smell? Are there pleasant smells or unpleasant smells? Describe how things might smell if you got too close. How might things smell tomorrow?
- **TASTE:** What sorts of flavors might you taste or what flavors are you reminded of? Sweet, sour, salty, or bitter? Moist or dry?
- **TOUCH:** What textures can you feel? Soft, rough, hard, dry, wet, fluffy, etc?

How can you include sensory details in your writing?

Begin with a simple, uninteresting sentence. *I got up in the morning for breakfast.* Add action and sensory details to the scene.

Example:

I cracked open my bedroom door and peered out into the dim morning light. The tiny red ‘ON’ button was glowing from the coffee maker and I saw Grandma’s white and blue sugar bowl on the edge of the counter. A loud gurgling escaped from the coffee maker as hot water seeped quietly through the filter and dripped fresh coffee into the pot. I heard Grandma’s worn slippers shuffling down the hallway before I heard her ask, “Joanne, are you awake already?”

As Grandma walked past me, I caught a whiff of her perfume. It smelled like spring lilacs and baby powder. She filled a mug with the coffee, and the scent of French Vanilla filled my nose. Grandma handed me the mug and I took it. The rim of the mug was sweet and sugary as I held it to my lips. The steam from the coffee wafted into my partially open mouth and I took a giant gulp. The liquid was hot and creamy as it ran down my throat. Grandma reached for my hand and held it between her dry, papery skin. We sat silently on the scratchy, wool couch until I slurped the final sip and Grandma rose to refill my cup.