

**Excelsior Online
Writing Exercise 1
Grades 5-6**

Writing Concepts: Descriptive Paragraphs

Prerequisite: Knowledge of adverbs, adjectives, similes, metaphors, sensory details, and basic paragraph structure

What you will need: A recently read chapter book, preferably a classic; an age-appropriate painting by a famous artist

Characteristics of Good Descriptive Writing

1. Good descriptive writing includes many vivid sensory details that paint a picture and appeals to all of the reader's senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste when appropriate. Descriptive writing may also paint pictures of the feelings the person, place or thing invokes in the writer.
2. Good descriptive writing often makes use of figurative language such as analogies, similes and metaphors to help paint the picture in the reader's mind.
3. Good descriptive writing uses precise language. General adjectives, nouns, and passive verbs do not have a place in good descriptive writing. Use specific adjectives and nouns and strong action verbs to give life to the picture you are painting in the reader's mind.
4. Good descriptive writing is organized. Some ways to organize descriptive writing include: chronological (time), spatial (location), and order of importance. When describing a person, you might begin with a physical description, followed by how that person thinks, feels and acts.

(from Reading Rockets. "Descriptive Writing." WETA. Readingrockets.org, Nov 4, 2018.)

Descriptive Writing Exercise 1

The left column has factual sentences. The right column uses those sentences and makes them descriptive—i.e. filled with active verbs, sensory images, imagery, adjectives, adverbs, etc. Your job is to make the factual sentences descriptive. The first one has been done for you:

Factual Sentence	Descriptive Sentence
The young boy sat in the meadow and relaxed as the sun went down.	The grass caressed his feet and a smile softened his eyes. A hot puff of air brushed against his soft, chubby cheek as the sky paled yellow, then crimson, and within a breath, electric indigo.
The boy pulled a large fish out of the river.	
The girl stood on the corner of the busy intersection and witnessed the accident as it happened.	
The woman had a terrible headache.	
The woods slowly came to life as the sun came up.	
The hunted creature ran through the thick forest and screamed as the thorns cut into his skin.	
Write a fact about your teacher:	Describe your teacher:
Write a fact about your home:	Describe your home:

Descriptive Writing Exercise 2

Take a look at a painting that you like by a famous artist. Now, describe it, using sensory details, adjectives, adverbs, etc. Start with a topic sentence that states how the painting makes you feel or think. Then use the contents of the painting to support your idea: describe the motion, the subjects, the imagery. Move from left to right, top to bottom, or middle to outer borders to describe it. End with a concluding sentence that sums up the main point of your descriptive details that support your topic sentence. Devote 8-10 sentences in constructing this paragraph.

Descriptive Writing Exercise 3

Part 1: Based on a chapter book you recently read, describe the main setting as you imagine it, using the same methodology as above. Devote 6-10 sentences.

Part 2: Now think about the relevance of the setting to the book. Start with a topic sentence that states how/why the setting is important and meaningful to the book.

Develop 2 specific and relevant ways in which the setting is indeed important and meaningful. Then use evidence from the book to support your 2 points. After developing the topic sentence and the 2 specific points, take the time to find relevant passages in the book for evidence. Note the chapter and page. Make sure the passages indeed shows descriptive details that help provide context and meaning.

End with a concluding sentence that sums up the main point of your descriptive details that support your topic sentence. Devote 6-10 sentences in constructing this paragraph.

At Excelsior Online, we do more extensive work on developing paragraphs in various formats and modes in a methodical and constructive way because our goal is to help students develop stronger, more precise and effective writing as well as know exactly what they are writing and why. We help students understand the function of each sentence in a paragraph and work on developing more in-depth, meaningful paragraphs that improves the quality of their writing and thinking skills.

Programs 1 and 4 address this at every level, every week, and every semester. Learn more about our programs:

<https://www.leapwithexcelsior.com/our-ela-programs>

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