

Lesson 6 The Writing Process: Descriptive Writing

Writers use descriptive writing in many ways. Descriptive writing can play a big part in some stories. It is also important in nonfiction. You are going to use your own experience as the base for a descriptive passage. You will describe observations you have made or events you have seen.

First, review the steps of the writing process.

Prewrite: Choose a topic. Collect ideas. Make lists or charts. Organize ideas.

Draft: Write ideas down on paper in sentences.

Revise: Fix mistakes in draft. Add details. Change things around to make the writing better. Rewrite the sentences.

Proofread: Check for final mistakes in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

Publish: Make a final, error-free copy. Share with readers.

Prewrite

Your descriptive writing may take the form of an observation report, such as watching a plant grow and develop. Your descriptive writing may take the form of an eyewitness account, such as watching a storm from the safety of your home. Start by simply listing your first ideas about observations you have made or events you have seen.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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Choose one idea from page 17 that you think might work. In the space below, freewrite for two minutes, writing down absolutely everything you can think of about the idea.

Did your thoughts flow freely, or did you struggle to find things to write down? If you wrote easily, there's a good chance that the idea will work. If you had a hard time thinking of anything, choose another idea and freewrite about it on a separate sheet of paper. Continue until you find a topic idea about which your ideas flow easily.

Once you decide on a topic, you can collect details. Use this chart to record details. Use information from your freewriting, and write new ideas.

What I Saw	What I Heard	What I Smelled
What I Felt	What I Tasted	

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So far, you have been choosing a topic, collecting information and ideas, and recording details. Now, it is time to put your ideas in order. Think about the event you will relate in your descriptive writing. Use the sequence chart on this page to list the events in order.

A sequence chart consisting of ten horizontal rectangular boxes, each containing a single horizontal line for writing. The boxes are arranged vertically and connected by downward-pointing arrows, indicating a chronological sequence of events. A large, light gray watermark reading "SAMPLE" is oriented diagonally across the center of the page, overlapping the boxes and arrows.

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Revise

You worked hard to put your ideas on paper. You must now imagine that someone else wrote it. You must read your own work as if you have never seen it before. This is a hard job. But if you look at the writing with “new eyes,” you are more likely to spot mistakes or problems.

Answer the questions below about your draft. If you answer “no” to any of these questions, those are the areas that might need improvement. Feel free to make marks on your draft so you know what needs more work. Ask a friend to read your draft and answer the questions, too.

- Did you keep your audience in mind? Did you include details that will interest them and that they will understand?
- Did you make your first sentence especially interesting so that readers will want to continue reading?
- Did you tell events in order? Did you use time-order words to make it clear when events happened? Did you include a good ending?
- Did you use sense words? To how many of your readers’ senses did you appeal?
- Did you use sentences of different lengths and styles to keep your writing interesting?

Read your draft again and underline words that tell how something looked, sounded, smelled, felt, or tasted. Is there one in every sentence? Are there just a few? Look carefully to see where you could add descriptive words to make your description stronger. Here is how Kathy changed a sentence in her draft.

After the concert, the crowd was ~~loud~~ ^{roaring}.

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Proofread

It is best to proofread for just one kind of error at a time. Read through your passage once for capital letters. Read it again for end punctuation. Then, read it again for spelling. Here is a checklist to help you as you proofread your revised descriptive writing. Ask a friend to proofread your writing, too.

- ___ Each sentence begins with a capital letter.
- ___ Each sentence ends with the correct punctuation (period, question mark, or exclamation point).
- ___ Each sentence states a complete thought.
- ___ All words are spelled correctly.

When proofreaders work, they use certain symbols. Using these symbols makes their job easier. They will make your job easier, too.

- **T** three little lines under a letter mean that something should be capitalized. Write the capitalized letter above it.
- If there is a period missing, do this **o**
- Can you insert a question mark like this **?**
- Don't forget your exclamation points **!**
- Fix misspelled words like **this** ~~tis~~
- Make this mark **(¶)** to show where to indent a paragraph.

Use these symbols as you proofread your descriptive writing. Remember to read your writing out loud. Sometimes it is easier to catch mistakes when reading out loud.

