

Writing with a Purpose

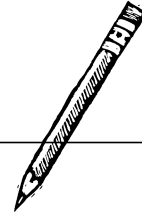
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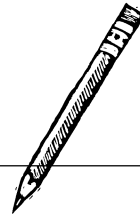
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IV. Descriptive Writing



People often think of descriptive writing as painting a picture with words. Descriptive writing can appeal to much more than the sense of sight. The writing can appeal to the reader's sense of touch, smell, hearing, and even taste. Descriptive writing can stand on its own, or it may be used to develop a topic sentence, as it was in the following example.

Model Paragraph

It was a desolate sight. What had once been a beautiful Victorian home with wide windows and comfortable looking porches was now merely a blackened shell. Smoldering debris sent clouds of sooty smoke into the starless night sky. The occasional snap of fire, not yet through with its destructive work, kept onlookers alert as an icy wind swept through the remains of what had once been a thing of beauty and comfort.

Analysis of Model Paragraph

The writer developed this paragraph by supplying descriptive words to help the reader hear, see, feel, and smell the fire scene.

It was a desolate sight.

1. It had been a comfortable home.
2. Now a blackened shell
3. Smoldering debris
4. Snap of fire
5. Icy wind

In this section, you will write several descriptive pieces, using descriptive details to expand topic sentences. Don't forget to edit any draft that is to become a final draft.



22. The Stranger

Your first assignment in the descriptive section of *Writing with a Purpose* is one in which you will have to stretch your imagination. Throughout your lifetime, you have seen hundreds of strangers. You have seen them on the streets of your town or city, observed them in crowds on television, and noticed them at ball games or other events. You may find that you are unable to write a description of any one of these people because you can't remember exactly what any of them looked like. If that is true, you will have to imagine a stranger to describe.



First, you need to know the setting in which you are to imagine this stranger. Are you ready?

The Setting

It is a rainy, dark September evening. The wind is dashing the rain against the windows of your house. There is a knock at the door. You jump to your feet and race to the door. When you open it you see . . .

The Stranger

1. Male, female, age?

Suggestions: Older man, young woman, elderly female are possibilities. Think of your own.

2. Height and weight?

Suggestions: Tall and slender, thin and stooped, short and roly-poly are possibilities. Now add your own.

3. Hair and eyes?

Suggestions: Squinting eyes, carefully waved hair, and balding are some suggestions. Now add your own.

4. Type of clothing

Suggestions: Dressed in torn jeans, wearing ropes of bright jewels, clothed in black are some possibilities. Think of your own.

5. Distinctive characteristics

Suggestions: Mole on cheek, hooked nose, bright smile are some possibilities. Add your own words on the line below.

6. Manner

Suggestions: Friendly, menacing, fearful are some possibilities. Add your own.

Now you are ready to write your description. A topic sentence and a paragraph pattern are supplied to get you started. Don't hesitate to make any changes that you feel are necessary.

Topic Sentence and Paragraph Pattern

When I opened the door of my house on that dark and rainy evening in September, I was confronted by a stranger.

1. Describe the stranger, using the words you have listed.
 2. Based on the type of words you have used, write the reason the stranger had for knocking on your door.
 3. Briefly explain your reaction.
 4. End with a sentence in which you tell your reader why you reacted that way.
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