

Writing a Descriptive Essay

Descriptive writing is like painting except that you, the writer, use words instead of colors to communicate your impressions. First you observe something, and then you transform the image into words. The readers can then interpret what they read in their own ways.

When writing a descriptive essay, you may choose vivid, fresh language, or you may use examples. Also, you might take something ordinary and, by comparing it with something extraordinary, make it interesting, or you may use your senses. Whatever you choose to describe, start with the obvious, but don't stay there.

Features:

1. A well-focused subject can be ordinary or extraordinary, but you should strive to make it as interesting as possible by emphasizing what makes it interesting or new and unusual. Pick something specific: an event, person, or animal.

2. How you treat your subject is directly related to how your reader will react to it. Give plenty of specific descriptive detail. For example, if you say, "I saw a bird this morning," you have allowed the readers to imagine any bird they want. However, if you say, "I saw the first robin of spring this morning--a plump male-- his red breast glowing in the sun," then the readers receive a clear picture. Details can employ any or all of the five senses. If you're describing an event, watch people moving and hear them talking. Create a dominant impression for your reader.

3. Create a clear pattern of organization. Your introduction should work from general to specific, ending in a thesis sentence. You should have several paragraphs that develop and describe your topic, and your conclusion should restate your thesis or conclude your event.

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