

Description toolkit © Pie Corbett 2024



Talk for Writing

Always ask, "What mood am I trying to create?" – then you can select words that fit.

To create a description that the reader can imagine, making it sound real and using it to intrigue, you might want to:

Nursery/Reception	Y1/2: as in N/R+	Y3/4: as in Y1/2+	Y5/6: as in Y3/4+
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about what images and objects look like using adjectives (describing words): <i>spotty, colourful, tall, round</i> • Orally describe what something looks like, what you can hear, what it feels like, what it smells like (senses) • Orally describe where something is using simple prepositions: <i>The scruffy dog sat under the bed.</i> • Help the reader to see what you are describing by using a simile: as tall as a giraffe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Name it' to create a clear picture in the reader's mind with specific nouns and proper nouns: <i>poodle/Rottweiler rather than dog</i> • Help the reader picture the object, character or setting with carefully chosen adjectives: <i>the small, round pot; the enormous worm; the calm, glistening lake</i> • Create a clear image by piling up the description using a simple sentence of 3 (commas in a list): <i>Fred was tired, old and bored.</i> • Add detail or feeling to the character's actions through verb choice, i.e. 'crept' instead of 'walked' Limit – <i>got, came, went, said, looked</i> • Describe how someone does something using adverbs: <i>She watched quietly.</i> • Make it sound good for the reader by using alliteration: <i>Sally slept silently</i> • Use repetition to add detail, e.g. repeating the nouns: <i>a cat, a lean cat, a mean cat; a bridge, a stone bridge</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Show' not 'tell' how a character feels through their body language response: <i>The shadow darted forwards. Her skin crawled!</i> • Match the mood or atmosphere by selecting powerful, precise and well-chosen nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs: <i>rusted, overgrown, smeared, smothered, snatched, bounded, savagely, kindly</i> • Create a clear image by piling up the description using a detailed sentence of 3 (commas in a list): <i>The dragon's eyes glistened, its scales shimmered and leathery wings beat at the air like bellows.</i> • Bring a setting to life through personification: <i>The bushes seemed to be holding their breath.</i> • Create atmosphere through metaphor and simile: <i>Flashlight eyes kept watch like scanning towers.</i> • Add intriguing detail through expanded noun phrases: <i>The shaggy dog at the end of the lane begged on all fours.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulate detail and descriptive techniques to suit purpose – to scare the reader, to lull the reader • Use a character's reaction or the author's comments to show the effect of a description: <i>Joanna shuddered. This was not a happy place.</i> • Explore the sounds of the scene through onomatopoeia: <i>The bees buzzed busily.</i> • Ensure all word choices earn their place and add something new and necessary, i.e. not the <i>red letterbox</i> but the <i>rusted letterbox</i> • Use precise detail when describing to help the reader to picture the scene: <i>His gold fob watch glinted.</i>