

Descriptive Writing

GCSE English · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

1. Worked example

Turn a telling sentence into a showing one: 'The old man was tired.'

Step 1 · Identify what is told

The abstract state: 'tired'.

Step 2 · Find physical evidence

Heavy eyelids, a slow shuffle, a sigh, sagging shoulders.

Step 3 · Write with precise detail

'His eyelids drooped; each step dragged, his boots were filled with sand.'

Step 4 · Check

The word 'tired' never appears, yet the reader feels it.

Answer: 'His eyelids drooped; each step dragged, his boots were filled with sand.'

Check: Emotion shown through evidence, not named.

2. Now try one with the steps

Plan a zoom structure for an image of a busy market.

Step 1 · Wide

Step 2 · Narrow

Step 3 · Narrower

Step 4 · End

Answer:

3. Practice

Show your working. The marks tell you how much is expected.

1. What does 'show, don't tell' mean? [2]

2. Name four senses other than sight you could use in a description. [1]

3. Name two structures you could use for a description without a plot. [1]
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4. Rewrite 'She was nervous' to show it. [2]
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5. Why should you avoid clichés? [1]
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6. Replace the cliché 'the wind howled' with a fresher image. [2]
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7. What is a time-lapse structure? [1]
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8. Why end a zoom structure on a small detail? [2]
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9. Write a sentence about a railway station at dawn using sound. [2]
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10. How can a semantic field create mood in a description? [2]
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11. Write two sentences describing a classroom after everyone has left, with one long and one short sentence. [2]
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12. Plan a contrast structure for 'a seaside town in summer and winter' in two lines. [2]
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13. Why might a single fragment ('Nothing.') be effective in a description, and why should it be used rarely? [2]
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14. Write an opening sentence for a description of a forest at night that avoids starting with 'The'. [2]

4. Before you hand it in

Turning a description task into a story with lots of events.

If you choose description, keep the action minimal and structure by movement or time.

Piling adjectives: 'the dark, gloomy, spooky, creepy house'.

One precise adjective or a concrete detail.

Using only sight.

Include at least two other senses in every paragraph.

Ending abruptly when time runs out.

Plan your final image first and leave time to write it.