

If writing is to describe well, it must paint colorful pictures in the mind of the reader. A good writer of description must be observant. He depends mostly on his sight, but he also tells what he has heard, tasted, felt, or smelled.

How can you write about sounds? You might describe the noise of a city street—rumbling trucks, honking horns, and screeching brakes. The sounds of animals on a farm may be squealing pigs, quacking ducks, or bleating sheep. Perhaps you are describing geese that are migrating. Does their excited honking sound like fifty people at a family reunion all talking at once?

In some cases you may describe how something tastes, smells, or feels. What flavors of candy did Aunt Mary make? Did the piece you sampled taste sweet, spicy, or tart? Did a sweet aroma come from the kitchen, or did it smell as if something had burned? A newly sanded board might feel smooth, while the bark on a tree might feel rough and scratchy. Be sure your five senses are alert as you create the picture. Use vivid, precise words that tell about colors, sounds, shapes, smells, sizes, and flavors.

The description of a cabin uses exact nouns and descriptive verbs. For example, it says *spider* and *poppies*, not just *bug*, *creature*, or *flowers*. It uses descriptive verbs like *sagged*, *drooped*, *torn*, *patched*, and *disappeared*.

Notice the difference in the following sentences.

**Too vague and general:**

The man arose and went to the barn because his animals were making a lot of noise.

**Much more descriptive:**

The farmer hopped out of bed and raced to the barn because his pigs were squealing, his calves were bawling, and his turkeys were gobbling in alarm.

The description of a cabin uses fresh, meaningful adjectives. Study the following lists. The first list shows examples from the description above. The second list shows less descriptive ways of writing the same thing.

**More Descriptive**

ancient roof  
shabby growth of green moss  
flimsy web  
fresh breeze  
gorgeous poppies  
large cracks

**Less Descriptive**

very old roof  
green stuff  
very weak web  
little wind  
nice flowers  
big holes

**Lesson Outline:**

1. **A description simply describes a scene or a happening.** It does not tell a story. It does not have conflict or dialogue.
2. **A good description paints colorful pictures in the mind of the reader.**
3. **A good writer of description is observant and uses his five senses.** The sense of sight is used most.
4. **A good description uses exact nouns, verbs, and adjectives.**

**Exact nouns:**

**Place:** farm, town, city, park  
**Worker:** farmer, carpenter, plumber  
**Plant:** maple tree, cornstalk, blackberry bush

**Exact verbs:**

**Walk:** trot, amble, stumble, pace  
**Talk:** mumble, chatter, encourage, whisper, shout

**Exact adjectives:**

**Big:** huge, gigantic, towering  
**Nice:** pleasant, friendly, lovely

5. **A good description uses spatial order.** This is an orderly method of describing things as they are arranged in space. Various methods can be used.

Begin at the top and move downward, or vice versa.

Begin at the left and move right, or vice versa.

Begin at the front and move back, or vice versa.