

Remember not to use adjectives like *big*, *nice*, and *good* when you could use more exact words like *huge*, *pleasant*, *valuable*, *strong*, and *useful*. Use descriptive adjectives with nouns. For example, do not just say *the horse*, *the pig*, or *the grass* when you could say *the hardworking horse*, *the friendly old horse*, *the greedy little pig*, *the lush green grass*, or *the parched brown grass*.

A description should be arranged in a logical order. Notice the order in the following example, which describes an elephant. It begins with his trunk and ends with his tail.

Do you know what an elephant looks like? His nose, called a trunk, looks like a large rubber hose hanging from his upper jaw. The tusks at the base of his trunk are like two ivory spears pointing forward, ready to fight any troublemaker. His ears look like huge fans, which he flops to keep himself cool. The distance from the ground to the top of his back is about the same as from his trunk to his tail. He may be nine or ten feet tall. His back is broad and flat, a perfect place to sit for a ride. His legs, as thick as the trunk of a tree, are supported by round, flat feet. His tail is like a thin rope about three and one-half feet long. An elephant's tail is quite small compared to the rest of his body.

The order used in descriptions is called *spatial order*, or the order of space. Details may be given from top to bottom, from left to right, from front to back, from outside to inside, from near to far, or in the reverse order of any of these. The *kind* of order is not as important as *having* a definite order. Do not be haphazard in description—for example, first describing the trunk of an elephant, then his feet, then his tail, then his tusks, and then his back. Decide what order you will use, and stick to it.

- A good description paints colorful pictures in the mind of the reader.
- A good description uses exact nouns, verbs, and adjectives.
- A good description uses spatial order.

Begin at the outside and move to the inside, or vice versa.

Begin at a near point and move to a distant point, or vice versa.

Project idea: On the chalkboard, keep a list of striking, picturesque words and expressions from your textbooks or storybooks. Add more as you come across them in your own reading, and encourage the students to extend the list with colorful expressions from their reading. The expressions should stretch your students' imagination, but they must not kill interest by including words that are far above their level.

