

The Descriptive Essay

What is a Descriptive Essay?

A Descriptive Essay can be defined as the expression, in vivid language, of what the five senses experience. A richly rendered description freezes the subject in time, evoking sights, smells, sounds, textures and tastes in such a way that the reader becomes one with the writer.

A Descriptive Essay can be divided into two types of essays:

1. **Objective Description:** Describing the subject in a straightforward and literal way, without revealing your attitude or feelings.
2. **Subjective Description:** Conveying a highly personal view of your subject, seeking to elicit a strong emotional response from your readers.

Strategies for writing a Descriptive Essay:

1. Focus a Descriptive Essay around a dominant impression. The introductory paragraph should include the dominant impression that is the focus of the essay, typically as the thesis of the paper.
2. Select the details to include. The power of description comes from the ability to use only details that support the dominant impression.
3. Organize the descriptive details. There is an organizational strategy. It can be spatial, chronological, emphatic (ending with your subjects most striking elements), or by sensory impression (first smell, then taste, then touch and so on).
4. Use vivid language and varied sentence structure. Richly evocative language is used which involves the readers' senses. Too many adjectives and short sentences and unnecessary words are deleted. Use of simile, metaphor, personification and onomatopoeia is found throughout.

For Instance:

"Summertime, oh summertime, pattern of life indelible, the fade proof lake, the woods unshatterable, the pasture with the sweetfern and the juniper forever and ever, summer without end; this was the background, and the life along the shore the design, the cottagers with their innocent and tranquil design, their tiny docks with the flagpole and the American flag floating against the blue sky..." E. B. White, from *Once More to the Lake*