

Name: _____ ()

Date: _____ Sec _____



Three steps for writing an effective description

Write a description according to the following steps:

- Decide on a dominant impression
- Use vivid supporting details
- Use Figurative language

1. Decide on a dominant impression

The dominant impression is the one aspect or feature of what you want to describe – be it a person, a crowd, an object or an event. You will then write a topic sentence highlighting that feature. The topic sentence will also guide you on the type of details to be included in order to achieve your purpose.

Here is an example:

The Tiong Bahru neighbourhood park pulsates with life in the early hours of morning. While the sky is still dark, many elderly are already making a beeline from their neighbourhood precincts to the garden. At the far end of the garden, near the pond teeming with goldfish, a group of qigong practitioners with red top and white pants practise their fluid moves to the accompaniment of soothing Chinese music, and the rhythmic call of “Hu...(exhale) and Xi...(inhale). There are about fifty of them in their synchronized exercise. Down the slope, atop a ziggurat like structure decorated with pretty pants are three middle ladies who groove to the blare of fast beat music. Further down the garden, on concrete ground, about eight ladies practice a kind of Kung Fu fan dance, opening and closing their big red fans with aplomb.

2. Use vivid supporting details (Use your five senses)

To write good descriptions, you need to record what you see, hear, taste, touch and smell (Use your five senses), which in turn evokes thoughts and feelings in you. It is important to give specific, concrete details and not vague ones.

Vague: It was raining heavily

Concrete: Drops of rain fell heavily from the dark grey clouds that loomed over me. It smelled clean and crisp like freshness from the mountains. I tightened my grip on my trusty bright cherry red umbrella as the beads of water fell. I closed my eyes and enjoyed the therapeutic sound of the water droplets pattering all around me.

Vague: She was a small woman

Concrete: Standing at a mere 1.4m and weighting a measly 35 kg, she had the height and weight of a primary four school girl, even though she was already forty.

Vague: I bought a black bag

Concrete: It is a black ladies' document bag which I bought from Takashimaya. I made sure it was capacious enough to take the weight of all my files and books. There was a front zipped compartment with smart vertical lines. The main compartments are divided into two, one broader and the other narrower. Another section secured by Velcro and a zip can be found at the back. The leather handles give a good smooth feel, and very importantly, there is a nicely contoured shoulder piece for the long black straps.

3. Use Figurative Language

Comparisons by way of figurative language such as similes and metaphors will add lustre to your descriptions. The simile is a comparison that uses 'like' or 'as'. The metaphor does not make use of 'like' and 'as'

Metaphor	Simile	Personification
A figure of speech that makes an implied comparison between two things that maybe unrelated but share some similarities	A figure of speech that makes a comparison using the words 'like' and 'as'	A figure of speech that gives human qualities to an object or an idea.
• Singapore is a melting pot of cultures. • There are many different cultures in Singapore.	• He hung his head down like a dying flower. • He was dejected.	• The trees swayed in unison • The wind blew and the trees moved.
• She is the black sheep of the family • She is the disfavoured member of the family	• She has a temper like a volcano • She gets angry easily	• The dry lawn was begging for water in the drought. • The grass was dry.

HOW TO STRUCTURE YOUR ESSAY

- Spatial order
- Chronological order
- Order of importance

Spatial order

Top to bottom Left to right Front to back	For example, if you want to describe your room, you could start from the door and work your way through to the middle of the room and then the end of the room.	Use the following transition words to signal direction: above, around, below, behind, beside, next to, in front, back of, under
---	---	---

Example 1: Describe your bedroom

Located next to the entrance of my room is an antique slab of wood with four sturdy legs supporting it, also known as my study table. Most of the time, I treat it as if it is invisible. Instead I frequent what is beside it – my cozy bed where I am often engulfed by the softest and fluffiest cotton comforter which I use as a shield from the word.

Chronological order

Arrange details according to time. It works best in describing an event	It fits naturally because when we tell a story, we often tell it in the order that the events occur.	Use the following transition words to show time order: next, then, later, that evening, finally, tomorrow, meanwhile.
---	--	---

Example 2: Describe the worst day of your life

The worst day of my life occurred three weeks ago. It began one morning at 7.48am when I woke up to a high pitched squeak. Next, I got out of bed only to discover a rat-infested room. The repulsive pests were scampering on the marbled tiled floor as I shrieked in fear and trepidation and cried out to my younger brother for help. Meanwhile, my ludicrous brother was preparing a feast for the revolting creatures. The little rascal entered room, planted cubes of expensive cheese on the bed and scurried away just like a rat. The next thing I knew, the furry animals were on my bed and I lost consciousness shortly after.

Order of importance

Put the most important details at the beginning or the end. It works best for describing people or objects.	You should either begin your essay with the most important detail at the front and the least important detail at the end or put the least important detail at the start and save the most important detail for the last.	Use the following transition words to show order of importance: the most, primarily, foremost, one reason is that, most significantly
---	--	---

Example 3: Describe a person you admire.

One person whom I admire is Yuko Nakazawa, who is the founder and CEO of UPQ. UPQ produces cool electronic gadgets, better known as 'Japan Xiaomi'. From sleek smartphones to transparent touchscreen keyboards, the products Yuko has helped to design and launch are really unique! What I find most significant about her is her courage in pursuing her interests. In 2012, she left her job as a product planner for a smartphone company and used her savings to start her own café. This was because she wanted to create something original for others to enjoy. Similarly, this motivated her to launch UPQ. More importantly, seeing how she fearlessly pursued her interests with such determination inspires me to do the same.

Essay question: Describe the possession that matters most to you and explain why you would never be prepared to part with it.

My house is simply furnished. Nothing extravagant. Marble floor tiles cover the perimeters of the rooms. A television with a huge black casing at the back forms the only form of entertainment for the family. The entire house runs like a well-oiled machine, with daily routines set by my stalwart and punctilious mother.	
My sister and I share a room where I spend most afternoons. Cooled from the hustle and bustle of the world, I like to prop myself against a pillow and read a book. Sometimes, I would simply lie on my mattress, soaking in the fragrance of freshly pressed sheets and drift into a reverie. In contrast, the kitchen is a daily battlefield. Constant and inane bickering takes place between my grandparents over cooking styles. From a young age, I have learnt that it is never wise to have two chefs in the kitchen.	
Nevertheless, I love the kitchen. Entering the kitchen, one can feel the rough texture of the floor, formed by a copious number of small old style squared tiles. It feels like walking into a coffee shop in the 60s. The kitchen is spacious. A green marble table sits heavily at the entrance of the kitchen, flanked by six brown wooden chairs. I love the comforting aroma of home-cooked food that my grandparents prepare. Mealtimes over plates of delectable Hokkien-style dishes are often filled with light-hearted conversations.	
The best part of the kitchen is the bathroom, which houses a huge urn. Dragon prints lace the dark greenish urn, giving it a sense of royalty and importance. A red hose fills the urn with water that is used for bathing. As children, we loved the urn. Without a heater and a shower head, we would scoop the cool water from the urn to bathe. We sometimes place our toys in the urn and imagined enemy invasions and boats capsizing in the sea of water. I remember reading a story about a snail who was placed into a	

huge urn. She would transform into a beautiful lady in the day to prepare meals for the farmer who brought her home. We used to fantasize that such a snail existed in the urn.	
Then, news came that our block will be demolished and we will be relocated. Demolished? I could only retain an image and the memories of this place in my mind? The idea was inconceivable. This house has been a classroom where I learnt lessons about family life and how to be a human. How to love sacrificially and to show forbearance. To appreciate and be grateful for the simple things in life. Needless to say, I have benefitted from this three-generational relationship. Every piece of furniture in this house tells a story about the people I love and the jolly times we have had together. Parting ways with it will not be easy. Yet, I am certain that the values I have imbibed throughout these years will influence the way I build my own family in the future.	

Essay question: Describe a world without music?

The man stared yearningly into his lover's eyes. Carefully, he leaned in and pressed his lips against her as the camera circled them in slow motion. A handful of audience members cringed as loud, smooching noises filled the theater for an unbearable length of time. Without the dreamy notes on a piano and an enchanting melody, watching a grand, romantic scene would be an extremely awkward affair. In a world without music, movies would be very different. Horror movie antics would fall flat without the riveting sound of fiddles before the great reveal, and action movies would not pack a punch without an adrenaline charged soundtrack keeping audiences glued to the screen.	
Imagine entering a fancy restaurant only to be greeted by the sounds of serving trolleys, the clinking of cutlery and the guests being ushered in and out, dampening our gastronomic experience. Without music to accompany our day to day existence, what is left would simply be noise and noise far more pronounced. Our hour long commute would be invaded by the jarring sounds of vehicles on the road as passengers stare idly into space. The sounds of footsteps, shoving and chatter would punctuate out mornings, without the familiar Coca-Cola advertisement jingle to perk us up or buskers playing tunes to lighten the mood on the streets. Picture the clamorous jostling of a crowd and tired faces trying to find their peace of mind, with the monotony of deadlines, commitments and expectations ringing in their heads.	
In this world, 'dace' parties would certainly be a messy sight. You would find people shaking their hips and wiggling haphazardly to no beat or rhythm. You would find a stagnant, quiet atmosphere lacking a loud, pumping bass to bring a rush of exciting energy into the room and people shuffling around, confused at what to do. Instruments would be purposeless objects decorating our homes and concerts and musicals would not exist as spaces to bring like-minded people together. 'Singing' would be disastrous – imagine a man speaking in a different baritones and at varying paces, in a terribly disorganized fashion, unguided by any notes or melody.	
Away from the buzzing crowds, our walls would be filled with silence – a creeping stillness, augmenting the loneliness of our spaces. During rainy seasons, we might never experience the tender assurance we can find in The Beatles' gentle cooing 'Let it be, let it be, let it be...' On the dullest of days, we might never get the burst of inspiration or joy we can so magically discover in a three minute track belting 'I'm walking on sunshine!' gleefully, over and over. Musical chords and notes on a score are universally understood. Without music, we truly would be missing valuable opportunities to connect with people of different languages and generations. Without music to express ourselves, within us might be trapped storytellers, with a wealth of emotions and stories that would never be shared with the world.	
Yet, a world without music would be one where we are forced to pay attention to all the sounds around us, and grow to appreciate them. Perhaps, without our headphones plugged in, we might observe or even take part in the conversation going on around us. Perhaps in some ways, this might inspire a better world but certainly there would be a whole lot missing.	

