

Writing a Descriptive Paragraph

Part 1: Organization

- Description
- Space Order
- Specific Details
- Planning a Space-Order Paragraph

Part 2: Grammar

- Adjectives

Part 3: Sentence Structure

- Prepositions
- Prepositional Phrases

Descriptions are "word pictures." You tell how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and sounds. You need to become a sharp observer and notice many small details so that you can write a good word picture.

Organization

When you write a description, you tell what something - a person, an object, or a place - looks like.

There are two keys to writing good descriptions:

1. Use space order to organize your description.
2. Use lots of descriptive details.

Space Order

Imagine that you are standing in the doorway of your classroom. How would you describe the room to someone who has never seen it? Here are some possibilities

- You might start at the left side of the doorway and work your way around the room in a clockwise direction to the right side, ending at the doorway again.
- You might start at the front of the room and go from front to back, first describing the chalkboard, the teacher's desk, and the area around the teacher's desk. Then you might describe the students' desks in the center of the room, and finally the walls and/or windows at the back and sides of the room.

This kind of organization is called **space order**. Here are other kinds of space order that you can use to write a description:

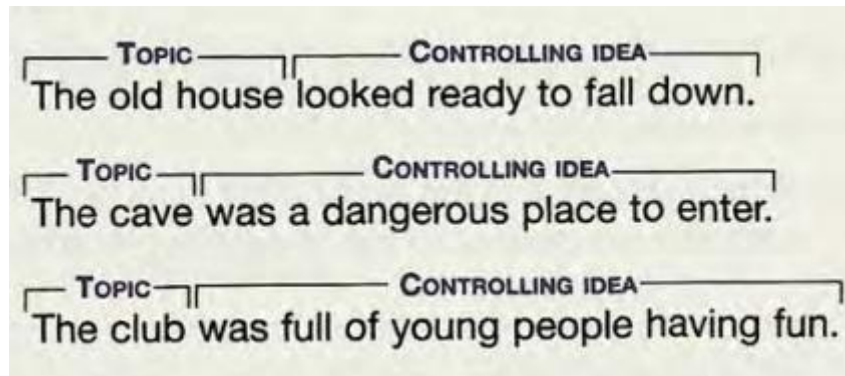
top to bottom	right to left	far to near	outside to inside
bottom to top	left to right	near to far	inside to outside

Topic and Concluding Sentences for Descriptive Paragraphs

The topic part of a topic sentence for a paragraph of description usually names the person, place, or thing to be described.

The controlling idea part usually gives a general impression (beautiful, neat, messy, interesting, unusual, crowded, busy, noisy, and so on).

Here are some examples of topic sentences for paragraphs of description.



The concluding sentence of a description may repeat the idea stated in the topic sentence.

In the model paragraph, the writer used different words to repeat the idea that the roommate's side of the refrigerator is neat. It may also give the writer's opinion or feeling about the topic. Here are other examples of concluding sentences for paragraphs of description.

- **In short, I doubt the old house will survive one more winter.**
- **My friend and I were very happy when we got out of the cave.**
- **To sum up, music, dancing, and flashing lights make clubs exciting and fun.**

Grammar

Adjectives

Adjectives describe nouns and pronouns.

Adjectives tell what things (or people look like, what kind they are, or how many of them there are. Adjectives answer the questions: What kind? Which one? and How many?

what kind? the **old** car with the **broken** window

which one? the **fourth** chapter of the book, **his** car
how many? **twelve** students, **a few** students

Here are some things to know about adjectives.

1. Adjectives always come in front of nouns, not after them.

twelve talented young musicians

2. Adjectives can also follow linking verbs.

be The children **are** happy.

seem You **seem** sad.

look Brides always **look** beautiful.

smell The cookies **smell** delicious.

taste Candy **tastes** sweet.

feel Silk **feels** smooth.

3. English has a kind of adjective called a compound adjective.

A compound adjective is two or more words that function together as one word. A compound adjective often has a hyphen or hyphens between its parts.

ten-week semester

part-time job

two-year-old child

4. Adjectives are always singular.

Never add s to an adjective, and never use a plural word as an adjective.

big feet (not bigs feet)

terrible memories (not terribles memories)

Be especially careful when a compound adjective containing a number comes before a noun.

a six-foot wall (not a six-feet wall)

a five-dollar bill (not a five-dollars bill)

a two-year-old child (not a two-years-old child)

Of course, when words such as foot, dollar, and year are nouns, they can be plural.

The wall is six feet high.

The book costs five dollars.

The child is two years old.

5. Nouns can be adjectives.

the **English** book

some **tennis** balls

a **shoe** store

the Japanese students

6. Proper adjectives (adjectives referring to nationalities, languages, geographic places, and so on) are capitalized.

Egyptian custom

Spanish class

Cuban government

Asian languages

7. -ing and -ed words can be adjectives.

Participle I	Participle II
swimming pool	bored students
cooking class	used car
sleeping baby	broken heart
boring class	stolen money

Order of Adjectives

When you write several adjectives in a row, sometimes you must put them in a particular order, and sometimes you can choose your own order depending on the kind of adjective. One kind is called cumulative adjectives, and the other kind is called coordinate adjectives.

Cumulative Adjectives

The **poor little black** dog

Coordinate Adjectives

The **cold, wet, (and) hungry** dog

The **hungry, wet, (and) cold** dog

The **wet, cold, (and) hungry** dog

Order of Cumulative Adjectives ²	
Kind of Adjective	Examples
1. Articles, demonstrative pronouns, possessives	an, an, the, this, that, these, those, her, their, Mary's
2. Quantity	two, fifty, some, many, (a) few
3. Opinion	poor, beautiful, interesting, cheerful, expensive
4. Appearance	<i>Size</i> big, little <i>Shape/Length</i> round, square, short, long <i>Condition</i> rusty, broken, hungry, wet, cold
5. Age, color	old, new, young black, red, blond
6. Nationality, religion	Guatemalan, European, Congolese, Asian Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, Protestant
7. Material, purpose	silk, wood, cotton, gold, metal swimming, reading, hiking
8. Noun used as an adjective	shoe (as in <i>shoe store</i>), wedding (as in <i>wedding dress</i>)

Prepositions and prepositional phrases

Prepositions are little words such as *on*; *to*, *from*, *in*, and *at*. Most prepositions are one word. A few prepositions are two words (*because of*) or three words (*in front of*). Here is a list of common prepositions.

Some words, such as *to*, are sometimes prepositions and sometimes another part of speech. Compare these two sentences.

1. We went *to* the supermarket.

2. We wanted to buy some fruit.

In sentence 1, to is a preposition because it is followed by a noun (the supermarket). In sentence 2, the word to is part of the infinitive verb phrase to buy.

about	besides	near	under
above	between	of	until
across	beyond	off	upon
after	by	on	with
against	down	out	without
along	during	outside	according to
around	except	over	because of
at	for	since	in addition to
before	from	through	in back of
behind	in	throughout	in front of
below	inside	till	in place of
beneath	into	to	next to
beside	like	toward	out of

Prepositional Phrases

A preposition is usually combined with a noun or noun phrase to make a **prepositional phrase**, such as in the house or at six o'clock.

Some prepositional phrases answer the question **where**. These are prepositional phrases of place. Prepositional phrases of place are useful in space-order paragraphs to show the location of objects in a description.

Other prepositional phrases answer the question **when**. These are prepositional phrases of time. Prepositional phrases of time are useful in "how to" paragraphs to give the order of the steps.

at last	before the test
after that	upon arrival

after class in the morning
on New Year's Day at midnight

Other prepositional phrases show possession:

(the father) of the bride
(the name) of my boss
(the colors) of the rainbow
(the president) of the company

Others describe or identify someone or something:

(the woman) with red hair
(the student) from Ecuador
(the man) in the blue shirt
(the car) with the flat tire

As you read the model paragraph, look for prepositional phrases. Put parentheses around them.

Дополнительные материалы для повторения и закрепления:

Paragraph Structure

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLzKqujmdGk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zoBuQgefNZg>

Descriptive Paragraph

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXwEGwgGeuw>

Adjective order

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1it2mB1jn4>