



Toolkit Focus: Description

To create a description that the reader can imagine, making it sound real and using it to intrigue, you might want to:

EYFS	Year 1 & Year 2	Year 3 & Year 4	Year 5 & Year 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look attentively and talk about new experiences • Use adjectives (describing words) to say what images and objects look like • Look carefully at images, objects, animals, events, etc. • Use all the senses to discuss and describe: <i>look, touch, taste, hear and smell</i> • Use effective verbs to describe the quality of movement, <i>e.g. crept instead of tiptoed</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use precise nouns to 'name it' and create a picture in the reader's mind, <i>e.g. poodle rather than dog.</i> • Choose adjectives to help the reader picture the scene. If two are together, separate them with a comma, e.g. the small, round pot (a simple noun phrase) • Sentence or power of 3 to describe, <i>e.g. Santa was red, fat and friendly.</i> • Choose powerful verbs rather than got, came, went, said, look. • Use adverbs to describe how something does something, <i>e.g. she tiptoed quietly.</i> • Experiment with alliteration, <i>e.g. Sally slept silently.</i> • Use 'as' and 'like' similes, <i>e.g. Bea was brave like a lion. Pete was as slow as a snail.</i> • Observe carefully and draw on all the senses when describing: <i>sight, sound, smell, taste, touch.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Show' not 'tell' – describe a character's emotions using senses or a setting to create an atmosphere. <i>E.g. The shadow darted forwards. Her skin crawled.</i> • Select powerful, precise and well-chosen nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs that really match <i>e.g. rusted, overgrown, smeared, smothered.</i> • Use personification, <i>e.g. The bushes seemed to be holding their breath.</i> • Use metaphors and similes to create atmosphere, <i>e.g. even the tables froze.</i> • Use alliteration to add to the effect, <i>e.g. Sally slept silently. The dark, damp dangerous wood...</i> • Use expanded noun phrases to add intriguing detail, <i>e.g. The shaggy dog at the end of the lane begged on all fours.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use expanded noun phrases to add intriguing detail and include relative clause where relevant, <i>e.g. The shaggy dog, who loved playing with his ball, begged on all fours, waiting for Joe to throw his toy.</i> • Use a character's reaction or the author's comments to show the effect of a description, <i>e.g. Joanna shuddered.</i> • Use onomatopoeia along with alliteration to reflect meaning, <i>e.g. The bees buzzed busily.</i> • Ensure all word choices earn their place and add something new and necessary, <i>e.g. not the red letterbox but the rusted letterbox.</i> • Use precise detail when describing to bring a scene alive, <i>e.g. His gold fob watch glinted.</i> • Select detail and describe for a purpose, <i>e.g. to scare the reader, to lull the reader.</i> • Consider how your description reflects the pace of the story at that time, <i>e.g. more detailed descriptions of settings or feelings when there is less action, showing characters have time to really take in their surroundings and thoughts. As opposed to, shorter selective description when in the action, perhaps using show not tell or perhaps using single well selected adjectives (or no description at all) to reflect the pace at that time.</i>



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Useful teaching ideas:

Useful ideas for teaching description – always co-construct the toolkit with the class

Model all aspects of the toolkit and display word banks, sentences and ideas on prompt cards, washing lines or learning walls

N/R	Y1/2 As in N/R plus:	Y3/4 As in Y1/2 plus:	Y5/6 As in Y3/4 plus:
<p>Use new experiences – images, objects, animals, places, characters – to discuss and ‘say what it looks like’;</p> <p>Develop the use of the 5 senses and related language through specific experiences, e.g. feely bag, curiosity corner, nature table, nature walks, etc.;</p> <p>Carefully draw and paint set pieces;</p> <p>Guided discussion, focused on a stimulus with word gathering;</p> <p>Constant modeling of descriptive language by adults.</p>	<p>Regular painting and drawing of objects, animals, scenes, etc.;</p> <p>Develop use of 5 senses through science;</p> <p>Constant modeling of descriptive language by adults;</p> <p>Train children to generate descriptive language and add to their word banks with new vocabulary;</p> <p>Use collections to reinforce language, e.g. <i>shiny things, soft things, colour tables</i>, etc.;</p> <p>Collect interesting descriptive words and sentences from quality books and ‘bank’ for future use.</p>	<p>Teach drawing – close observational work;</p> <p>Develop language and observation through science work. Use lenses;</p> <p>Regular new experiences to discuss and describe. Play descriptive barrier games;</p> <p>Use short-burst ‘spine’ writing to practice observational writing;</p> <p>Brainstorm banks of vocabulary, list and use when writing;</p> <p>Use magpie books and boards to gather great descriptions from quality books.</p>	<p>Avoid overwriting when describing. Learn how to trim/ tighten sentences.</p> <p>Avoid repeating ideas, telling the reader the obvious (<i>hot flames</i>) and only select description that adds something new and moves the plot forwards.</p> <p>Discuss how good authors balance description and action.</p> <p>Gather creative imagery into banks and discuss effects on the reader.</p> <p>Map, learn and write in the style of the best descriptive passages available, e.g. description of the barn in <i>Charlotte’s Web</i>.</p> <p>Gather specific words banks through short-burst writing before writing narrative.</p> <p>Draw on previous writing and raid for effective imagery and description.</p>