



Using Imagery in Descriptive Writing

Add depth to your descriptive writing through imagery.

Create Dynamic Images

- ✓ Static descriptions fall flat and don't add any level of understanding to the reader's experience.
Example: **My father got ready for work every day.**
- ✓ Instead of using static descriptions, try to create a dynamic environment or dynamic images for your reader by showing movement or helping the reader experience the setting.
Example: **From my bed, I would listen as my father got ready for work and then locked the door behind him, one-two-three clicks.**

Incorporate Sensory Images

- ✓ Use descriptions that illustrate what you experience through your senses (sight, smell, sound, touch, and taste).
- ✓ Sensory descriptions allow your reader to better visualize and relate to the depiction of your scene.

Read the following excerpt from Amy Tan's short story "The Alley" to see how many sensory descriptions you can find.

We lived on Waverly Place, in a warm, clean, two-bedroom flat that sat above a small Chinese bakery specializing in steamed pastries and dim sum. In the early morning, when the alley was still quiet, I could smell fragrant red beans as they were cooked down to a pasty sweetness. By daybreak, our flat was heavy with odor of fried sesame balls and sweet curried chicken crescents. From my bed, I would listen as my father got ready for work, then locked the door behind him, one-two-three clicks.

Sight Example: ...I could smell fragrant **red** beans as they were **cooked down** to a pasty sweetness.

Smell Example: ...our flat was **heavy with odor** of fried **sesame** balls and sweet **curried** chicken...

Sound Example: In the early morning, when the alley was still **quiet** . . .

Touch Example: We lived on Waverly Place, in a **warm**, clean, two-bedroom flat...

Taste Example: ...I could smell fragrant red beans as they were cooked down to a pasty **sweetness**.

Brandon, Lee. Paragraphs and Essays. 8th Ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.