



Description toolkit

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

N/R	Y1/2 As in N/R plus:	Y3/4 As in Y1/2 plus:	Y5/6 As in Y3/4 plus:
- 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 – look, touch, taste, hear and smell - Use powerful verbs to describe the quality of movement, e.g. ‘crept’ instead of ‘tiptoed’	- Use precise nouns to ‘name it’ and create a picture in the reader’s mind, e.g. <i>poodle</i> rather than <i>dog</i> - Choose adjectives with care and use a comma, e.g. <i>the small, round pot</i> - Sentence or power of 3 to describe, e.g. <i>Santa was red, fat and friendly.</i> - Choose powerful verbs rather than – <i>got, came, went, said, look</i> - Use adverbs to describe how something does something e.g. <i>she tiptoed quietly</i> - Experiment with alliteration - Use ‘as’ and ‘like’ similes - Observe carefully and draw on all the senses when describing.	‘Show’ not ‘tell’ – describe a character’s emotions using senses or a setting to create an atmosphere. e.g. <i>The shadow darted forwards. Her skin crawled!</i> - Select powerful, precise and well-chosen nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs that really match e.g. <i>rusted, overgrown, smeared, smothered</i> - Use personification e.g. <i>the bushes seemed like they were holding their breath</i> - Use metaphors and similes to create atmosphere, e.g. <i>even the tables froze</i> - Use alliteration to add to the effect, e.g. <i>Sally slept silently. The dark, damp, dangerous wood ...</i> - Use expanded noun phrases to add intriguing detail e.g. <i>The shaggy dog at the end of the lane begged on all fours.</i>	- Use a character’s reaction or the author’s comments to show the effect of a description, e.g. <i>Joanna shuddered.</i> - Use onomatopoeia rather than alliteration to reflect meaning, e.g. <i>The bees buzzed busily.</i> - Ensure all word choices earn their place and add something new and necessary, e.g. not <i>the red letterbox</i> but <i>the rusted letterbox</i> - Use precise detail when describing to bring a scene alive, e.g. <i>His gold fob watch glinted.</i> - Select detail and describe for a purpose, e.g. to scare the reader, to lull the reader.

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:
Use new experiences – images, objects, animals, places, characters – to discuss and ‘say what it looks like’; Develop the use of the 5 senses and related language through specific experiences, e.g. feely bag, curiosity corner, nature table, nature walks, etc.; Carefully draw and paint set pieces; Guided discussion, focused on a stimulus with word gathering; Constant modeling of descriptive language by adults.	Regular painting and drawing of objects, animals, scenes, etc.; Develop use of 5 senses through science; Constant modeling of descriptive language by adults; Train children to generate descriptive language and add to their word banks with new vocabulary; Use collections to reinforce language, e.g. <i>shiny things</i>, <i>soft things</i>, <i>colour tables</i>, etc.; Collect interesting descriptive words and sentences from quality books and ‘bank’ for future use.	Teach drawing – close observational work; Develop language and observation through science work. Use lenses; Regular new experiences to discuss and describe. Play descriptive barrier games; Use short-burst ‘spine’ writing to practice observational writing; Brainstorm banks of vocabulary, list and use when writing; Use magpie books and boards to gather great descriptions from quality books.	Avoid overwriting when describing. Learn how to trim/ tighten sentences. 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. Discuss how good authors balance description and action. Gather creative imagery into banks and discuss effects on the reader. 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>. Gather specific words banks through short-burst writing before writing narrative. Draw on previous writing and raid for effective imagery and description.