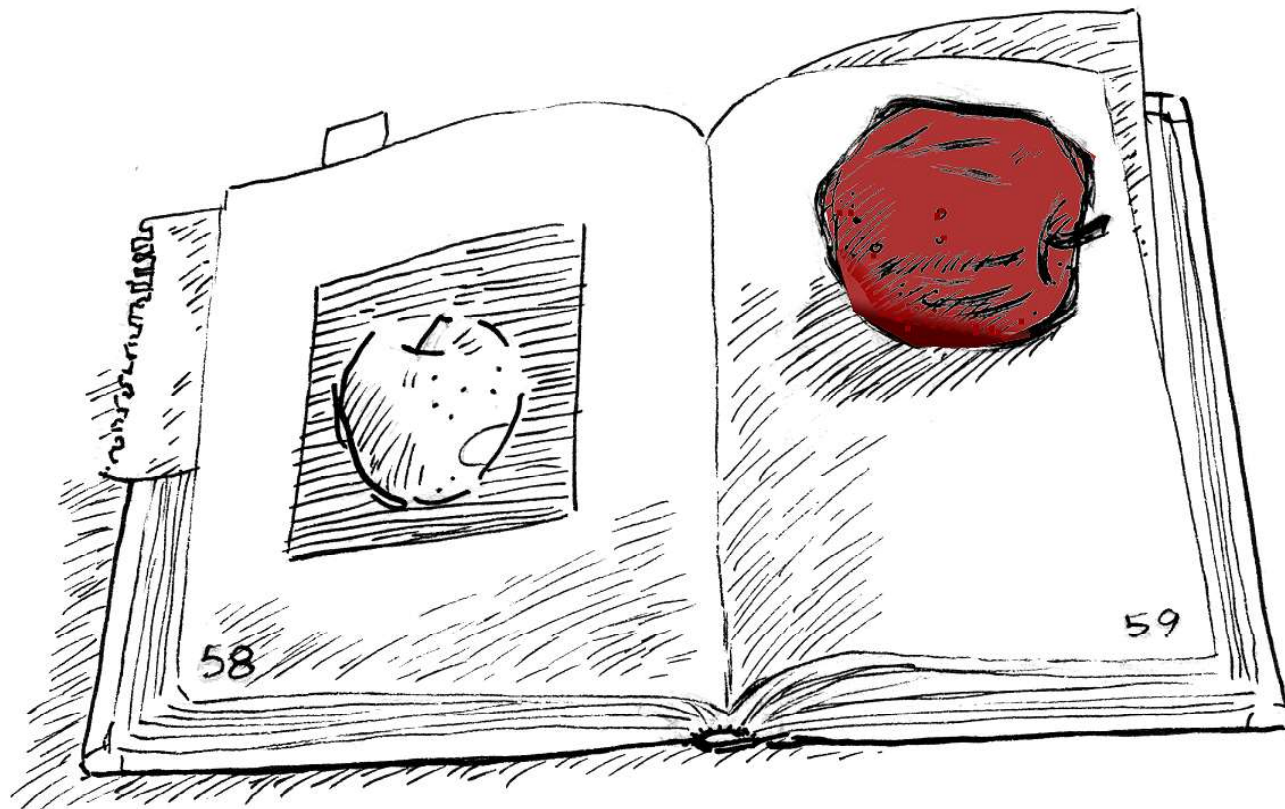


Description Mode & Literary Devices



Description Mode

Description patterns are closely linked with Narrative essays.

- They are used for portions of your essay *or* they can be the dominant technique throughout paper
- Your work is strengthened by using sensory impressions
- **In general, descriptions place images in the mind of your readers. You are creating scenes and settings for your audience to convey mood or to generate a theme.**

Strong adjectives increase the sensation and have impact on your statements.

- Use vivid descriptions with adjectives.
Rule of thumb: do not use more than two adjectives per noun.
Too many descriptive words can act like too much sugar to coffee or tea.
- If a detail of your story is not interesting to you, then do not use it.
- When stressing an opinion, avoid vague tones; be assertive in your opinions.

Types of Description

**There are two types of descriptions,
both contain a form of opinionated language:**

- Objective
- Subjective

Objective Descriptions

Objective descriptions: these remain neutral to the author's feelings, yet contain strong sensory words to connect with the reader. The sentence shown in the below example is arbitrary due to the use of the phrase:

“unexpected citrus scent”

which stresses a *possible* reaction from the audience if they smell this particular species of rose. The author does not reflect his/her personal feelings towards the rose itself.

example:

The Hampshire rose, with a pale-off-white hue, has an unexpected citrus scent when cultivated properly.

Subjective Descriptions

On the other hand, **subjective descriptions** want to convey an *emotional* response and capture the author's opinions, all in order to get a *reaction* from the audience. In the example provided, it is clear the author has an agenda and wants to shift your emotional reaction to his/her cause. Material such as this would fit a specific industry, a political commentaries, newspaper editorials, or other genres which require overt opinions. *Be careful when using this technique.* If too obvious, or too didactic you will turn your audience away from your writing. The example below overstates its judgements.

example:

Desperate to free his twisted, bloody leg from the rusty teeth of the trap, the timber wolf savagely and fanatically gnawed through his own flesh and muscle.

Sensory Impressions

A simple way for an author to enhance his/her writing is to include specific references to one or more of the five senses.

- smells, sounds, textures, tastes, sights
- **Sensory impressions** help describe people, scenes, or events with strong, personal details.
- By providing a small aspect of a social gathering the audience connects to the writer's specific memory of the event itself.
- Also, aim at the unexpected; readers anticipate details concerning sight. Provide some indication of the smells surrounding you, the sounds in the distance, the tastes in your mouth, or the texture of an object.

Literary Devices

Two important literary devices used in all forms of writing are the *metaphor* and the *simile*.

Both metaphors and similes have the same function, which is to *describe* a *comparison* between elements; even in essay writing, strong descriptive language can embellish a paragraph, or reinforce an opinion.

Simile

A simile makes comparisons of elements and ties them together with key words:

like or ***as***.

example:

*The manuscript's yellow pages proved to be
as bright as a late October moon.*

Metaphor

On the other hand, a metaphor uses language that *implies a relationship* between two unlikely elements. A well known example comes from William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*:

example:

All the world's a stage.

•

There are various types of metaphors.

Three basic metaphors are:

- **extended metaphor**
- **implied metaphor**
- **mixed metaphor**

Extended Metaphor

This type of metaphor motions beyond the opening phrase and continues its theme into subsequent sentences. Again, using the Shakespearian phrase itself, the monologue continues:

example:

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.*

Implied Metaphors

In the case of implied metaphors, these are more subtle, “hidden” or indirect metaphors. Poetry uses this technique; it can be argued that any full poem is an implied metaphor to explain a poet’s theme.

example:

Angrily she barked commands at her husband.

Mixed Metaphor

In the case of a mixed metaphor, these types of devices create an analogy between elements which cancel one another out or sound ridiculous when paired together. For comedy or sarcastic writing these can embellish your work. However, for a serious academic research paper an instructor may be prone to count off for illogical reasoning.

example:

All at once he was alone in this noisy hive with no place to roost.

—Tom Wolfe, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*

Personification

One other common type of literary device is called *personification*.

This is a figure of speech which gives an inanimate object or an abstract idea personalities and human characteristics. For informal essays and creative writing a personification adds a sense of the writer's presence to a project. However, mentioned in the past, as you can guess, this literary device would not work well with a formal research paper.

example:

Death sat in the corner, thoughtfully smoking his pipe, staring at the young men and women in the pub.

Organization

There are **four** different ways of organizing your information within individual paragraphs or the entire essay:

1. **Chronological:** the material is organized by an obvious time sequence:

past to present events, present to future events, future to past (backwards)

2. **Spatial:** details are discussed in the manner elements are visually displayed

- (person) head to foot || foot to head
- (building) roof to slab || slab to roof
- (room) left to right || top to bottom

3. **Emphatic:** details are arranged by an order of importance

This is based on the psychological concept that people remember best what they have experienced most recently. Your most compelling point is saved for last.

4. **Sensory Impression:** arranging paragraphs by themes of senses, one paragraph devoted to smell alone, then sight, hearing, touch, taste.