

The Write Place

THE WAC WRITING CENTER AT LSC- MONTGOMERY



The Descriptive Essay

This type of essay relies heavily on vivid descriptive detail. Depending on the subject being described, this could include information about appearance, sound, feel, or even taste and smell. To use this organizational pattern effectively, it is helpful to focus on one overall impression that can be supported by sensory details.

Purpose: to entertain and/or inform readers using sensory details

Perspective: third-person (*he, she, it, one, they...*), second-person (*you*), first-person (*I, we*)

Organization: by location, in the order perceived, in order of importance

Typical Structure:

1. Introduction:

- a. Attention-getter pointing to the subject being described
- b. Purpose of this description
- c. **Thesis:** overall impression to be created

2. Body (each paragraph):

- a. **Topic sentence:** one specific aspect of the overall impression
- b. Major sensory details
- c. Supporting details
- d. Transition to the next aspect

3. Conclusion:

- a. Final comment on the subject
- b. Overall significance of this description

Notes:

- Description is common in **expository** writing, such as journalistic reporting.
- A good description uses vivid language to paint a mental picture.
- Supporting details in the body of the essay may be grouped into individual paragraphs by time, space, or perception.
- **Similes** (comparisons using "like" or "as") and **metaphors** (figurative equations) are useful for giving the reader a quick mental image.
- **Strong verbs** (such as *hurry* and *blare*) are generally more vivid and interesting than the corresponding **adverbs** (such as *quickly* and *loudly*).