

Fifth Grade Essay Assignment: Descriptive Essay

What to do:

Write an essay describing something. Choose something small, yet personal. Only describe something you can observe right in front of you. Do not pick something that exists somewhere else (or no longer exists). Try to find something that isn't too complex. Length: At least 225 words; longer is okay.

Step by step instructions:

1. First, read about what a descriptive essay is on the back of this sheet.
2. Create a web for your pre-writing. Remember that each branch will become a separate paragraph.
3. Write an introduction. Do not write any variation of "I am going to tell you about..." Think about our discussion of introductions in class.
4. Write your first draft on wide ruled paper in pencil. Double space, which means skip lines. Remember not to use the word "you" anywhere in your essay unless you really mean to talk to the reader.
5. Edit your first draft by reading out loud to listen for where punctuation goes. Literally say "period" and "comma" when you see them. Watch for run-ons. I will be helping with this.
6. Hand write your final draft single spaced in pen—this paper will not be typed. After this essay, any essay you bring home may be typed. Indent your paragraphs and put a blank line between paragraphs.

You must turn in the following to receive full credit (put item #1 on top, #2 under that, etc.):

1. The turn-in checklist.
2. Your proofreading checklist.
3. Your second draft.
4. Your first draft.
5. Your map/web prewriting.

The Descriptive Essay

You use description to plant an image or sensation in the reader's mind. You want your reader to see, hear, feel, taste, or smell what you are describing. Here are some purposes you might have for the descriptive essay: to express yourself; to persuade; to inform; to be creative.

To begin:

Observe what you are describing. If it is a pair of old shoes, pick them up, feel them, look at them carefully, smell them (!).

Don't forget your sensory details. Does your subject make noise? Does it have a smell? How does it feel when you touch it? Is there a taste? You can't use all of your senses to describe every subject, but you should be able to use two or three.

Sometimes, when describing, it is good to compare your subject to something else. If you say that your dog's fur is like a teddy bear's fur, you are using a simile. If you say your dad is a bear in the morning, you're using a metaphor. Be careful: sometimes using too many or strange similes and metaphors will make your writing sound odd. Used correctly, they are an excellent way to describe something.

Adjectives! Don't forget adjectives. It really matters which ones you choose. Again, you don't want your writing to sound forced, but think if you want to describe something as merely dirty, or grimy; broken, or ripped apart; damp or musty; hot or sultry.

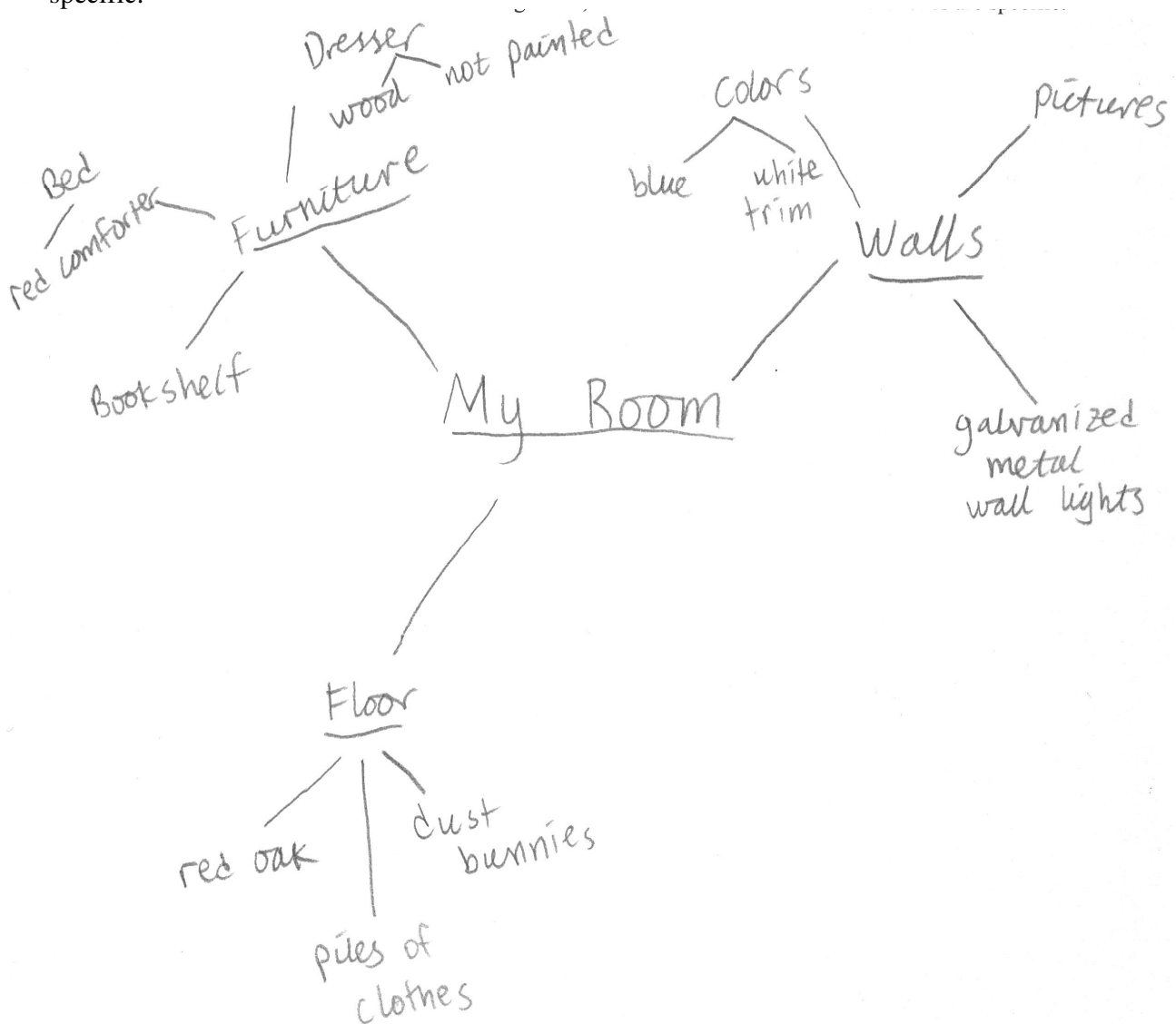
How To Write An Essay: Part 1: Prewriting.

This information sheet is in four parts. Part one is prewriting, part two is writing, part three is revising, and part four is editing.

Prewriting is the process where you gather as much information about your topic as possible. From that jumbled up mess an essay will emerge.

There are many names for the example below: mapping, webbing, or clustering.

A web is usually done with a pencil or pen, not on the computer. I find this is a good method when you have a million thoughts but you don't know how to organize them. The nice thing about webbing is it can help you tell what will be in each of your paragraphs. The example below is for an essay describing someone's bedroom. Notice that the first branches are general, and the branches of the main branches are specific.



How To Write An Essay: Part 2: Writing.

This information sheet is in four parts. Part one is prewriting, part two is writing, part three is revising, and part four is editing.

Okay, you have a pile of notes from the prewriting essay. How do you turn that into an essay?

First, you need a focus. A focus will give you direction because it will tell you what to write about. You need to look at your notes and decide what is interesting. In our example, a description of your room, you could focus on how messy or clean your room is. You could focus on how your room became “your” room. The point of the essay is to describe your room, but you should focus in on one aspect of your room to write about.

Eventually, you’ll need an opening paragraph, or introduction as I usually call it. You may write it first or last—it’s up to you. There are lots of ways to write an intro. You might: begin with a funny story to set a humorous tone; start with a simple fact that will be important later; draw your reader’s attention with a question or two; gain your reader’s attention with a startling fact, a confession, quotation, or hint of what’s to come; start out with dialogue; or simply identify the main points you wish to cover.

Make your opening interesting. HOW??? Well...I usually write things that are similar to the things I like to read. You have to decide what that is for you, but we’ll practice in class.

Okay...let’s take a look at that pile of notes you have from prewriting. You need to organize it. Every paragraph of your essay should have a separate idea, and each paragraph needs a topic sentence. For example, let’s say you have clustered some information about what is on the walls of your room, and you have several examples. One paragraph might read:

“My parents are pretty cool about me putting things on the walls, and I have a lot on the walls. On one wall I have a giant, framed poster for the movie *Finding Nemo*. On another wall I have a bulletin board filled with pictures I’ve taken with my friends, like the picture of Gina and me at Oaks Park, the one where we are laughing so hard we look demented.” Et cetera, et cetera.

Notice that every sentence relates to the first sentence. I’m only discussing what’s on walls. I’m not discussing the floor or the furniture. Notice how my example above is filled with specifics. I didn’t say posters, I said *Finding Nemo*. I didn’t say pictures, I described who is in the picture. Specifics will always get your reader’s attention and add lots of imagery to your writing. Don’t write about toothpaste, write about mint toothpaste with baking soda; don’t write about food, write about thick crust pepperoni pizza; don’t write about plants, write about a 100 foot tall Douglas fir tree.

Next is revising!

How To Write An Essay: Part 3: Revising.

This information sheet is in four parts. Part one is prewriting, part two is writing, part three is revising, and part four is editing.

This is my favorite part! Like prewriting, there are many, many things you can do to help you revise. Maybe I should define revising first, though.

Revising is NOT editing. Editing is looking for grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. Editing is fixing run-on sentences.

Revising is looking at your essay in a fresh, creative way. Revising is usually done with fun exercises that can really give you a new perspective on your writing. Revising will help you change, cut, add, or rewrite all or part of your essay.

Here are some methods:

1. Label a few parts of speech, such as verbs and adjectives. Write “V” above verbs and “ADJ” above adjectives. Look at your paper when you are finished, and decide if you could use stronger verbs or more vivid adjectives. Do your verbs really need adverbs? For example, you might say you ran fast to your house, but an even better way is to say you raced home.
2. Pick three or five or 10 sentences and rewrite each one three different times. Then, choose the best rewrite. You might even try them out on different people to get their opinions.
3. Think the five senses. Then, every time your essay uses sensory detail for touch, underline it and write a big “T.” Every time your essay uses sensory detail for smell, underline it and write a big “S.” Do the same for all five senses. When you are finished, decide if your essay has too much of one sense and not enough of another.
4. Look for emotional passages in your essay. All good writing contains strong feelings and emotions. If your essay is lacking these, put them in. Sometimes, it’s very difficult. You have to be brave.
5. Think of other ways that will help you make your writing the best it can be.

Here are some other questions to consider:

1. Is the writing interesting? Add examples or details.
2. Are there enough details? Add details, facts, or examples to support the main idea.
3. Is every sentence related to the topic? Cut unrelated ideas.
4. Are ideas and details arranged in a clear order? Reorder ideas and details to make the meaning clear.
5. Are the connections between ideas and sentences clear? Add transition words--because, for example, in other words, usually.
6. Is the language appropriate for the audience and purpose? Replace difficult words with easier ones for younger readers. For experienced readers, use more difficult words. Replace slang and contractions in formal writing.

How To Write An Essay: Part 4: Editing.

This information sheet is in four parts. Part one is prewriting, part two is writing, part three is revising, and part four is editing.

The most important thing is ***read your writing out loud***. Read it out loud many, many, many times. Make sure that what and how you read is reflected in your essay. If you pause when reading out loud, look to see what punctuation is there. The hard part is deciding which punctuation to use, but most of the time it will be a period or a comma.

You get a proofreading checklist with every assignment, and there is a proofreading checklist available on my home page.

Proofreading Checklist

Name: _____

Trimester: 1 2 3 Year: 2013-2014 Group: _____

Circle each item as you complete it.

1. I read my writing out loud to check for complete sentences and commas. There are no run-on sentences or fragments.
2. I began every sentence with a capital letter and ended with the correct punctuation mark. Exclamation marks are only used in dialogue.
3. I spelled all words correctly.
4. I capitalized names of people and places.
5. I capitalized each word in the title except: *and, but, or, a, an, the*, and prepositions that are fewer than five letters long (*from, to, in, out, on, of, over*, etc.). First word of a title is always capitalized.
6. I checked the back of this sheet for commonly misspelled words, especially contractions.
7. Possessive words have apostrophes: my mom's car; the day's race. Plural words not possessive do NOT get apostrophes: Dogs are cute and fuzzy.
8. My essay has an introduction about my topic in general. The introduction is a separate paragraph.
9. My essay contains several paragraphs, each with a separate idea. Each paragraph is indented, and there is a blank line between paragraphs on the final hand written draft. (Typed essays do not have extra blank lines.)
10. Hand written first drafts are double spaced. Hand written final drafts are written very neatly and are single spaced. Typed essays are double spaced, and have **two spaces after every sentence**.
11. The numbers one through ten are spelled with letters; numbers over ten are written with numbers *unless* they begin a sentence.
12. Book titles are italicized. Poems are in quotation marks. Movies are italicized. Television shows are italicized. Songs are in quotation marks. Note: when hand writing a paper, you underline instead of italicizing.
13. I didn't use "would" or "will" with past tense verbs. For example, I said, "Joey's mom made Joey behave" instead of "Joey's mom would make him behave."
14. I crossed out most of my "thats." For example: "I think that my room is a pig pen" should be "I think my room is a pig pen." I did not start any sentences with "so" or "because."
17. My essay stays in one verb tense, usually past tense.
18. I didn't use "you" or any words containing "you" such as *you're* or *your*.

(Use the other side, too !)

Commonly confused words:

<p>hear [verb] <i>to receive sounds through the ears</i> When did you <i>hear</i> the news?</p> <p>here [adverb] <i>in this place</i> The mail is <i>here</i>.</p>	<p>their [possessive form of <i>they</i>] <i>Their</i> pitcher struck out six players.</p> <p>there [adverb] <i>a place</i> [also used to begin a sentence] I'll see you <i>there</i>. <i>There</i> are more than two million books in the Harold Washington Library in Chicago.</p> <p>they're [contraction of <i>they are</i>] <i>They're</i> right behind you.</p>
<p>its [possessive form of <i>it</i>] You cannot judge a book by <i>its</i> cover.</p> <p>it's [contraction of <i>it is</i> or <i>it has</i>] <i>It's</i> your turn, Theresa. <i>It's</i> been a long day.</p>	<p>threw [verb, past tense of throw] <i>hurled</i> Zack <i>threw</i> the ball to me.</p> <p>through [preposition] Let's walk <i>through</i> the park.</p>
<p>to [preposition] We drove <i>to</i> Mexico City.</p> <p>too [adverb] <i>also; more than enough</i> Am I invited, <i>too</i>? Your poem has <i>too</i> many syllables to be a haiku.</p> <p>two <i>one plus one</i> Ms. Red Cloud's last name is <i>two</i> words.</p>	<p>your [possessive form of <i>you</i>] Rest <i>your</i> eyes now and then when you read.</p> <p>you're [contraction of <i>you are</i>] <i>You're</i> my best friend.</p>
<p>were [verb] past tense of <i>to be</i> The books <i>were</i> on the table.</p> <p>we're [contraction of <i>we are</i>] <i>We're</i> going to see the play.</p>	

Grade 5 Descriptive Essay Take-Home Directions

Please finish your descriptive essay at home. Your final will be written in pen, blue or black ink only. It is due on Thursday, October 31.

_____ I have no fragments, especially in the introduction. I have no run-ons. _____/3

_____ I didn't use the word "you" or any word containing "you" unless I really meant to speak to the reader. _____/3

_____ My final is hand written in blue or black ink, is single spaced, and there is one blank line between paragraphs. _____/3

_____ I'm turning in my web, my first draft, my final draft, this checklist, and my proofreading checklist. I did not staple my assignment. _____/3

_____ All of my paragraphs are indented at least two inches. I wrote within the left and right margins, and up against the left margin. If typed, my margins are one inch all the way around. _____/3

_____ My introduction and conclusion are in separate paragraphs. Neither my introduction nor conclusion use any variation of "I'm going to tell you..." or "My essay is about..." _____/3

_____ My punctuation is dark and large and all my i's are dotted and t's crossed. Commas have a dark circle like a period that is on the line, and the tail goes below the line. _____/3

_____ I checked my grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. _____/10

Total Points _____/31