

Descriptive Essay Builder Worksheet

Dominant Impression + 5-Senses Detail Builder

1) Choose Your Dominant Impression

This is the main mood / feeling your description should create.

Circle ONE or write your own:

Calm • Peaceful • Mysterious • Dark • Joyful • Tense • Magical • Lonely • Warm •
Busy • Quiet • Spooky • Dreamlike • Energetic • Cold • Hopeful

My Dominant Impression: _____

2) Build Your Sensory Details (Show, Don't Tell)

*Write **specific, vivid** details — avoid simple adjectives.*

SIGHT (What can be seen?)

Describe colours, shapes, movement, shadow, light, patterns, space.

Example starters: *I notice... / The light falls... / Something shifts...*

My description:

SOUND (What can be heard?)

Think: volume, rhythm, background noise, pauses, echoes.

Example starters: *I can hear...* / *A quiet sound lingers...* / *The air vibrates with...*

My description:

SMELL (What can be smelled?)

Fresh? Smoky? Sweet? Harsh? Familiar?

Example starters: *The scent reminds me of...* / *A sharp smell cuts through the air...*

My description:

TASTE (What flavours are present, even subtly?)

Does the air taste metallic, salty, sweet, herbal, burnt?

My description:

TOUCH (How does the environment *feel* physically?)

Textures, temperature, pressure, softness or roughness.

Example starters: *The surface feels...* / *A warm breeze brushes...*

My description:

Sight (choose any): flickering light, shifting shadows, rippling water, dust floating, cracked pavement, mirrored windows, fog creeping low, worn-out signboards, neon glow, crowded corners.

Sound: distant chatter, humming engines, leaves rustling, footsteps shuffling, birds shrieking, doors creaking, soft breathing, quiet murmurs, dripping taps, glass clinking.

Smell: rain on concrete, fresh laundry, old paper, sea salt, strong coffee, smoky street food, cut grass, perfume trail, gasoline fumes, wet soil.

Taste: honey sweetness, sharp lemon, burnt edges, mint freshness, chilli heat, cold metal, warm broth, bitter cocoa, salt on lips, charcoal smoke.

Touch: rough stone, warm mug, sticky fingers, cold breeze, smooth fabric, sand grains, damp air, cracked paint, scratchy jumper, soft fur.

3) Quick Prompt Bank (10 for Each Sense)

Use these to spark imagery.

Sight: flickering light • shifting shadows • crowded corners • rippling water • dust floating • cracked pavement • mirrored windows • fog rolled low • worn-out signs • flashing neon

Sound: distant chatter • muffled footsteps • wind humming • glass clinking •
rustling leaves • soft breathing • engines buzzing • birds shrieking • dripping taps •
doors creaking

Smell: rain on concrete • fresh laundry • old books • street food smoke • wet earth •
strong coffee • sea salt • perfume trail • gasoline fumes • cut grass

Taste: honey sweetness • sharp lemon • cold metal • burnt edges • mint freshness •
charcoal smoke • chilli heat • warm broth • bitter chocolate • salt on lips

Touch: rough stone • soft fabric • cold breeze • sticky fingers • warm mug • sand
grains • smooth metal • damp air • cracked paint • scratchy jumper

Organising Patterns + Sentence Starters

Choose ONE pattern for your paragraph or essay structure:

A) Spatial Order (Describe by position / location)

Near → Middle → Far

or Left → Centre → Right

Sentence Starters:

- To my left...
 - Directly in front of me...
 - Beyond that...
 - In the distance...
 - Closer to the ground
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B) Zoom Order (Wide → Medium → Close-up)

Start with the whole scene → zoom into small details.

Sentence Starters:

- From a distance, it seemed...
 - As I moved closer...
 - On the surface...
 - In the smallest corner...
 - If you looked closely, you would notice...
-

C) Chronological Order (As things happen)

Before → During → After / Start → Middle → End

Sentence Starters:

- At first...
 - Soon after...
 - A moment later...
 - As time passed...
 - Finally...
-

Show-Don't-Tell + Powerful Verb Bank

Show-Don't-Tell Swaps

TELL

SHOW

(Don't use)

(Use instead)

It was cold.

The wind bit at my fingertips and reddened my nose.

She was happy.

A bright grin tugged at her cheeks until they glowed.

The house was
old.

The floorboards groaned under every step; wallpaper peeled
like dry bark.

He was angry.

His jaw tightened, and his voice sharpened like snapping twigs.

The street was
busy.

People weaved past each other in fast, overlapping streams.

Verb Upgrade Bank (Use instead of boring verbs)**Basic Verb****Stronger Alternatives**

walk

stroll • wander • stride • march • shuffle

look

glance • gaze • examine • scan • peer

say

murmur • whisper • declare • mutter •
exclaim

run

sprint • dash • bolt • charge • race

move

shift • sway • slide • glide • shuffle

feel

sense • notice • register • absorb • savour

Mini-Edit Checklist + Peer Review

Self-Editing Checklist (Tick as you revise):

- ☐ I stayed consistent with my dominant impression (atmosphere).
 - ☐ I used all five senses at least once.
 - ☐ I used specific imagery (not vague adjectives).
 - ☐ I replaced *telling* sentences with *showing* details.
 - ☐ I used upgraded verbs and avoided repeating *was/were*.
 - ☐ My description is organised (Spatial / Zoom / Chronological).
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Peer Review Box

Reviewer Name: _____

1. What is the strongest descriptive moment?

2. Where could imagery be stronger or more specific?

3. Does the mood stay consistent throughout?
