

Observation Exercise with Example Responses

Purpose:

Develop the ability to notice and record descriptive details in your surroundings. Observation is a key skill in writing vivid descriptive essays.

Instructions

1. Choose a subject to observe: a person, place, experience, or object.
 2. Spend 5–10 minutes observing carefully.
 3. Record details using all five senses where possible.
 4. Focus on **specific, concrete observations** rather than general statements.
 5. Use your notes to create a mini descriptive paragraph.
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Observation Worksheet

Sense	Observations	Notes on Description / Example Responses
Sight		Example: “The café’s walls were painted a faded turquoise, chipped near the corners, revealing gray plaster beneath.”
Sound		Example: “Chairs scraped lightly against the wooden floor; distant laughter bounced off the high ceiling.”
Smell		Example: “The scent of brewed coffee mingled with buttery pastries, warm and inviting.”
Taste		Example: “A lingering sweetness of vanilla croissants hovered on the tongue after a bite.”
Touch		Example: “The café table was smooth with occasional rough patches from worn varnish; the chair’s leather felt cool under my hand.”

Mini Descriptive Paragraph (Example Response)

The small café exuded quiet charm. Faded turquoise walls, chipped in places, framed shelves lined with mismatched teacups. The aroma of rich coffee mingled with warm pastries, making every breath feel cozy. Wooden chairs scraped softly as customers shifted, laughter echoing faintly across the high ceiling. My fingers traced the worn edges of a table, cool under my touch, while a bite of buttery croissant left a sweet vanilla aftertaste that lingered pleasantly.

Reflection Questions

1. Which senses were easiest to observe? Which were harder?

2. How did specific sensory details help create a vivid scene?

3. Which details could be enhanced for stronger imagery?

Instructions for Students:

- Repeat this exercise with different subjects (person, place, object, experience).
- Compare observations and mini-paragraphs to examples in the essay collection.
- Focus on **specificity, sensory richness, and “show, don’t tell” techniques.**

