

# Details, Details, Details

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## **Writing Prompt (10 minutes)**

Congratulations on having begun your writing journey! You may be happy and still energized, but you may also find it tiring. Today should help things go a little easier.

Describe our mysterious object in as many words as possible ... but there is a catch! You *cannot* use *any* of the following words in your description:

**Nice • Interesting • Funny**  
**Bad • Good • Evil**  
**Fun • Awesome • Stupid**

Other commonly overused words to avoid:

## **Mystery object description:**

When you've composed your description, count the number of words you used: \_\_\_\_\_

*Authors have an important job in society; they are like observation superheroes. Authors have to be highly aware of themselves and the world around them so that they can create believable and interesting worlds in their books. They have to be able to make the reader feel like what is happening in a book is real even if what is happening is that a purple dog is flying to Cancun with his cheetah girlfriend on a plane made of rubber bands. Readers must feel that the scenario is possible, and that they are right there with the dog. This means authors have to use all their senses to describe things.*

Oh, and using a lot of these sensory details will also boost your word count! In the exercise above, we all just explored sight; now we will explore other senses.

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## ***Getting in Touch With Your Senses (10 minutes)***

The five senses:



1. Taste



2. Touch



3. Smell



4. Sight



5. Hearing

Are there ever times when you are not using all your senses? What about right now? Take 10 seconds to get in touch with all of your senses, and then describe this room. Go sense by sense, pausing in between to really focus on that sense:

***This room ...***

**sounds like:**

**feels like:**

**tastes like:**

**looks like:**

**smells like:**

You can tune into your surroundings whenever you're writing your novels.

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The noveling has begun, and you've been writing like a mad person. If your word count is looking pathetic, we have a solution. The number one way to get your word count soaring and give your readers descriptions they'll never forget is by adding concrete and sensory details to your novel.

**Concrete details are those details in your novel that come right out of your five senses:**



1. Taste



2. Touch



3. Smell



4. Sight



5. Hearing

"There was a dog in the alley." = 7 words

"There was a wet, one-eyed beagle covered in black mud, smelling like the inside of a sewage drainpipe in the alley next to the deserted bus station." = 27 words

Below, we've listed a few things that could use some spicing up in the detail department. We've also provided you with some cool **Word Banks** with very impressive synonyms. In the spaces provided, answer the questions for each of the following items, using *your senses* and *our Word Banks* to make your descriptions come alive on the page.

## Word Bank for "Nice"

delightful, kind, likable, pleasant, charming, agreeable, gratifying, lovely, friendly, appealing, gracious, polite, amiable, congenial, affable, benign, comely, suitable, respectable, proper

## Word Bank for "Interesting"

captivating, compelling, entertaining, stimulating, intriguing, fascinating, absorbing, engaging, enchanting, challenging, attractive, gripping, riveting, enthralling, exhilarating, mesmerizing, noteworthy, striking, significant

## Word Bank for "Funny"

hilarious, comical, humorous, weird, curious, droll, absurd, ridiculous, silly, witty, side-splitting, laughable, odd, peculiar, ludicrous, riotous, hysterical, uproarious, slapstick, zany

## Word Bank for "Bad"

poor, unsatisfactory, ghastly, dreadful, terrible, appalling, horrific, awful, unacceptable, disappointing, substandard, atrocious, abominable, loathsome, offensive, shoddy, dire, disastrous, grave, ominous

## Word Bank for "Good"

excellent, superior, outstanding, tremendous, fantastic, terrific, exemplary, desirable, beneficial, advantageous, favorable, decent, superlative, proficient, marvelous, useful, exceptional, incredible, altruistic, angelic

## Word Bank for "Evil"

deplorable, malevolent, wicked, immoral, depraved, corrupt, degenerate, diabolical, heinous, sinister, sinful, reprobate, monstrous, fiendish, infernal, demonic, malicious, hateful, iniquitous, nefarious

## Word Bank for "Fun"

amusing, enjoyable, pleasurable, festive, recreational, exciting, playful, merry, entertaining, appealing, mirthful, jovial, cheerful, celebratory, jollity, convivial, gay, jocular, animated, gleeful

## Word Bank for "Awesome"

breathtaking, amazing, remarkable, extraordinary, outstanding, incredible, magnificent, wonderful, superb, fantastic, grand, astonishing, majestic, notable, phenomenal, stupendous, spectacular, unparalleled, supreme, striking

## Word Bank for "Stupid"

unintelligent, vacuous, inane, foolish, dimwitted, imbecilic, moronic, senseless, dense, ignorant, idiotic, doltish, simpleminded, nescient, obtuse, imperceptive, absurd, inept, preposterous

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In the spaces provided, answer the questions for the following item, using *your senses* and *our Word Banks* to make your descriptions come alive on the page.

## ***A thunderstorm (10 minutes)***

What does it feel like?

What does it smell like?

What do the clouds look like? What does the rain gathering in the streets look like?

What does it sound like?

What does the rain taste like?

Stupendous job! If you ever feel like your word count is waning, be sure to use your senses and add a lot of concrete and sensory details.

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## *Tastes Like a Simile Is a Metaphor (10 minutes)*

**Similes** compare one thing to another using “like” or “as.”

Examples: *It's been a hard day's night, and I've been working like a dog.* — The Beatles

- He's as blind as a bat.
- It was as flat as a pancake.
- She's as strong as a bull.
- You are like the sun.
- The source code was like spaghetti.
- She's like a volcano waiting to erupt.
- He's going to drink like a fish.
- Eat like a bird, poop like an elephant.
- They fight like cats and dogs.
- I want to soar like an eagle.

Many similes are clichés (phrases that are overused and betray a lack of original thought). You should use well-known similes with care.

**More examples:**

**Metaphors** compare by saying something is something else.

Examples: *All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances.* — William Shakespeare

- His home was a prison.
- They were mere sheep.
- I'm not an angel.
- America is a melting pot.
- How could she hire a snake like that!
- He broke into her conversation.
- The committee shot her ideas down one by one.
- His head was spinning with ideas.
- You are my sunshine.
- That book kindled my interest in dragons.

The use of two or more different metaphors at the same time is normally best avoided as it can create conflicting images in a reader's mind, reduce the impact of each metaphor, and confuse your readers.

**More examples:**

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## Similes

"A room without books is like a body without a soul." — Marcus Tullius Cicero

"A house without books is like a room without windows." — Horace Mann

"A day without sunshine is like, you know, night." — Steve Martin

"He's like a drug for you." — Stephenie Meyer, *Eclipse*

"Love is like the wind, you can't see it but you can feel it." — Nicholas Sparks, *A Walk to Remember*

"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving." — Albert Einstein

"Fate is like a strange, unpopular restaurant filled with odd little waiters who bring you things you never asked for and don't always like." — Lemony Snicket

"Some people are like Slinkies. They aren't really good for anything, but they still bring a smile to my face when I push them down a flight of stairs." — Patricia Briggs, *Iron Kissed*

"A mind is like a parachute. It doesn't work if it is not open." — Frank Zappa

"I felt like one of Apollo's sacred cows- slow, dumb, and bright red." — Rick Riordan, *The Last Olympian*

"Character is like a tree and reputation its shadow. The shadow is what we think it is and the tree is the real thing." — Abraham Lincoln

"He'd felt like a jack-o-lantern for the past few days, as if his guts had been yanked out with a fork and dumped in a heap while a grinning smile stayed plastered on his face." — Cassandra Clare, *City of Ashes*

"Once again, you show all the sensitivity of a blunt axe." — J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*

"Why do you sit there looking like an envelope without any address on it?" — Mark Twain

"He had electric blue hair that had stuck around his head like tendrils of a startled octopus." — Cassandra Clare, *City of Bones*

## Metaphors

"Failure is the condiment that gives success its flavor." — Truman Capote

"I want to change my punctuation. I long for exclamation marks, but I'm drowning in ellipses." — Isaac Marion, *Warm Bodies*

"I am peanut butter rocky road with multicolored sprinkles, hot fudge and a cherry on top." — Wendy Mass, *Every Soul a Star*

"I'd say we're a nation of sheep, but I'd feel bad about defaming sheep that way." — Daniel Mullarkey

"Life is a moderately good play with a badly written third act." — Truman Capote

"If London is a watercolor, New York is an oil painting." — Peter Shaffer

"Boredom was my bedmate and it was hogging the sheets." — Andrew Davidson, *The Gargoyle*

"Admiration is the daughter of ignorance." — Thomas Fuller

"Anger is the wind which blows out the lamp of the mind." — Bodie Thoene

"The hippo of recollection stirred in the muddy waters of the mind." — Terry Pratchett, *Soul Music*

"Sand was dribbling out of the bag of her attention, faster and faster." — Sarah Blake

"She was a mind floating in an ocean of confusion." — Caroline B. Cooney

"Until the thirst for power parched his throat, he was a fearless and noble lord." — Lloyd Alexander, *The Black Cauldron*

"His smile was so wide he'd have had to break it into sections to fit it through a doorway" — Jerry Spinelli, *Maniac Magee*

"The nail that sticks out farthest gets hammered the hardest." — Patrick Jones

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## ***The NaNoWriMo Description Challenge (10 minutes)***

The following is a little more difficult to describe, but not impossible. Use sensory details with only **similes** and **metaphors** ... but you must use *both* similes and metaphors. If you can describe the following using all your senses, you will have no problem reaching your word count this November.

### ***Happiness***

Taste:

Touch:

Smell:

Sight:

Sound:

Stupendous job! If you ever feel like your word count is waning, be sure to use your senses and add a lot of concrete and sensory details.

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### ***Embarrassment***

Taste:

Touch:

Smell:

Sight:

Sound:

Stupendous job! If you ever feel like your word count is waning, be sure to use your senses and add a lot of concrete and sensory details.