

# Writing Essentials

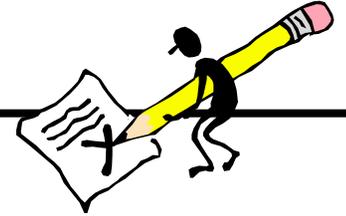


Learning Target

## Using Sensory Details to Paint Pictures with Words

I can use sensory details to describe experiences and events precisely.

I can express ideas using carefully-chosen words.



As readers, we rely on writers' words to paint vivid pictures in our minds. Revered writers tap into the five senses to transfer images from their imaginations to those of their readers. As writers, it is our responsibility to use sensory details to make the invisible visible, to allow silent pages to sound, to enable fingers to feel something other than flat pages, to cause our tastebuds to tingle, and to stimulate the sense of scent.

### Sight

The sense of sight is one that provides most of the detail for our stories. Our words become our readers' eyes, giving us a blank canvas upon which to paint a picture.



"The trees stood still as giant statues. And the moon was so bright the sky seemed to shine." - Owl Moon by Jane Yolen

"In November, the trees are standing all sticks and bones. Without their leaves, how lovely they are, spreading their arms like dancers. They know it is time to be still." - In November by Cynthia Rylant

"As he tumbled, ears over tail through the air, he managed to catch one last glimpse of Abilene. She was standing on the deck of the ship, holding on to the railing with one hand. In her other hand was a lamp - no, it was a ball of fire - no, Edward realized, it was his gold pocket watch that Abilene held in her hand; she was holding it up high, and it was reflecting the light of the sun." - The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Kate DiCamillo

## Sound

To make the pictures in our readers' minds come alive, we must tailor our writing to other senses, as well. Sound adds another dimension to the image. As writers, we can describe from where the sound is coming, how close it is, and how the source of the sound affects the characters.



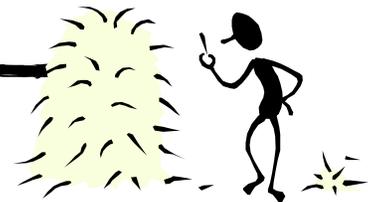
"I could hear it through the woolen cap Pa had pulled down over my ears. A farm dog answered the train, and then a second dog joined in. They sang out, trains and dogs, for a real long time. And then their voices faded away, it was as quiet as a dream." - Owl Moon by Jane Yolen

"In November, some birds move away and some birds stay. The air is full of good-byes and well-wishes. The birds who are leaving look very serious. No silly spring chirping now." - In November by Cynthia Rylant

"[Lucy] even rested her muzzle on his china stomach, and then the noises she made in her sleep, whimpering and growling and chuffing, resonated inside Edward's body. To his surprise, he began to feel a deep tenderness for the dog." - The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Kate DiCamillo

## Touch

Use of words related to the sense of touch allow readers to experience things they might never be able to or even want to touch. These kinds of descriptions can create sensations in your fingertips or they can even make your skin crawl.



"Our feet crunched over the crisp snow and little gray footprints followed us." - Owl Moon by Jane Yolen

"Never in his life had Edward been cradled like a baby. Abilene had not done it. Nor had Nellie. And most certainly Bull had not. It was a singular sensation to be held so gently and yet so fiercely, to be stared down at with so much love. Edward felt the whole of his china body flood with warmth." - The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Kate DiCamillo

## Taste

Sometimes, a sentence or two can make a reader salivate. As a writer, you have the power to prepare a tasty treat by mixing together a description so delicious the reader devours it.



"Our teacher has brought paper cups. We line up again, fill them, and drink. We lick our lips. I think I taste my special apple." - One Green Apple by Eve Bunting

"In November,... it tastes like cinnamon and can fill up a house in the morning, can pull everyone from bed in a fog. Food is better in november than any other time of the year." - In November by Cynthia Rylant

## Smell

Sense of smell is powerful. With one whiff, a smell can transport a reader back in time. By including details related to smell, you can spark a memory and allow your reader to connect in a meaningful and mouthwatering manner.



"Hay tickles my arms and makes Anna sneeze. It smells of dry sunshine." - One Green Apple by Eve Bunting

"In November, the smell of food is different. It is an orange smell. A squash and a pumpkin smell."  
- In November by Cynthia Rylant

"And then she set to work, kneading dough for bread and rolling out dough for cookies and pies. The kitchen soon filled with the smell of baking bread and with the sweet smells of cinnamon and sugar and cloves."  
- The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Kate DiCamillo.

\*\*Note: Descriptions of unpleasant smells have the potent power to change the mood of your writing. These sour scents can symbolize that something bad is happening or is going to happen.

"But after almost forty days and nights had passed, the weight and the smell of the garbage above and below him clouded Edward's thoughts, and soon he gave up thinking about revenge and gave in to despair."  
- The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Kate DiCamillo.

# Try It!

Choose a sense-less sentence from your draft. Write your original sentence in the DRAFT space below. Then, transform your sentence into something that your readers' senses will savor. Use the multiple sources on the following pages to revise your work thoughtfully.



Four horizontal lines for writing the original sentence.



Four horizontal lines for writing the revised sentence.



Four horizontal lines for writing the original sentence.



Four horizontal lines for writing the revised sentence.

# Sensory Words



## Sight

abrasive  
biting  
bleary  
blurry  
boiling  
brilliant  
bubbly  
bulky  
bumpy  
burning  
bushy  
clammy  
colorless  
cool  
cottony  
crisp  
cushioned  
damp  
dazzling

dim    
dingy  
downy  
drenched  
faded  
faint  
feathery  
fine  
flashy  
fluffy  
foamy  
freezing  
furry  
fuzzy  
gaudy  
glance  
glassy  
gleaming  
glimpse  
glistening

glittering  
gloomy  
glossy  
glowing  
greasy  
grimy  
gritty  
gushy  
hairy  
hazy  
heavy  
hot  
humid  
humid  
knobbed  
indistinct  
lacy  
leathered  
light

lukewarm  
matted  
metallic  
misty  
moist  
mushy  
numbing  
oily  
peer  
piercing  
plastic  
pocked  
pointed  
pulpy  
radiant  
rocked  
sandy  
scalding  
scorching  
scratchy

scummy  
shadowy  
shaggy  
sharp  
shimmering  
shiny  
silky  
slimy  
slippery  
sloppy  
smooth  
smothering  
smudged  
soapy  
soft  
sopping  
soupy  
sparkling  
spongy

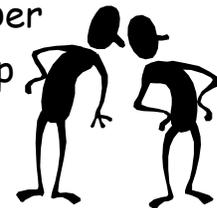
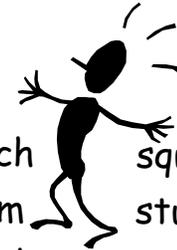
steamy  
steely  
sticky  
stifled  
stinging  
stony  
streaked  
striped  
stubby  
tangled  
tarnished  
tender  
tepid  
thick  
tickling  
tough  
twinkling  
velvety  
warm  
waxy



# Sensory Words

## SOUND

bang	click	grunt	peep	scratch	squeal
bark	coo	gurgle	piercing	scream	stutter
bawl	crackle	hiss	ping	screech	swish
bellow	crash	honk	plop	shriek	tear
blare	creak	howl	pop	shout	thud
boom	croak	hush	quack	shrill	thump
buzz	crunch	jabber	quiet	silent	tick
cackle	cry	jangle	rant	sing	tinkle
chatter	drip	laugh	rap	sizzle	twitter
cheer	explode	moo	rasp	slam	warble
chime	fizz	mumble	rave	snarl	wheeze
chirp	gag	murmur	rim	snore	whimper
clamor	gasp	mutter	ring	splash	whine
clang	giggle	noisy	roar	squawk	whisper
	grate		rumble		whoop
	grumble		rustle		yelp



# Sensory Words

## Touch

abrasive  
balmy  
biting  
boiling  
bristly  
bubbly  
bulky  
bumpy  
burning  
bushy  
chilly  
clammy  
coarse  
cold  
cool  
cottony  
crawlly

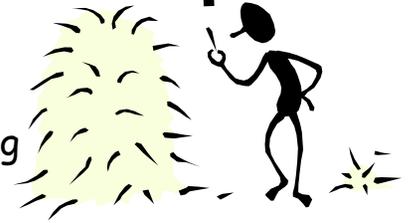
creepy  
crisp  
cuddly  
cushioned  
damp  
downy  
drenched  
dusty  
feathery  
feverish  
fine  
fluffy  
foamy  
freezing  
furry  
fuzzy  
glassy  
gluey  
gooey

grainy  
greasy  
gritty  
gushy  
hairy  
heavy  
hot  
humid  
icy  
knobbed  
lacy  
leathery  
light  
lumpy  
lukewarm  
matted  
metallic

moist  
mushy  
numbing  
oily  
piercing  
plastic  
pocked  
pointed  
powdery  
prickly  
pulpy  
ragged  
rocky  
rough  
rugged  
sandy  
scalding  
scorching

scratchy  
scummy  
shaggy  
sharp  
shivery  
silky  
slimy  
slippery  
sloppy  
smooth  
smothering  
soapy  
soft  
sopping  
soupy  
spongy  
springy

squashy  
squishy  
steamy  
steely  
sticky  
stifled  
stinging  
stony  
stubby  
sweaty  
tangled  
tender  
tepid  
thick  
tickling  
tough  
velvety  
warm  
waxy



# Sensory Words

## Taste

appetizing	gingery	rich
acidic	hearty	ripe
alkaline	hot	rotten
biting	lemony	salty
bitter	luscious	savory
bland	medicinal	sharp
burnt	minty	sour
buttery	moist	spicy
cold	nauseating	spoiled
creamy	palatable	stale
delectable	peppery	sugary
delicious	perfumed	tangy
doughy	pickled	tasteless
flavorful	piney	tough
flavorless	piquant	unappetizing
floury	plastic	unripe
fresh	raw	vile
fruity		vinegary
garlicky		zesty



## Smell

acrid	perfumed
aroma	pungent
aromatic	putrid
burnt	rancid
earthy	rank
fetid	reeking
fishy	scent
flowery	scented
foul-smelling	smell
fragrant	smoky
moldy	spicy
musky	stagnant
musty	steno
nauseating	sweaty
nidorous	sweet
odiferous	waft
odor	whiff
odorless	
old	

