

High-Performance Writing
Advanced Descriptive Writing

School-Home Link

Dear _____,

During the next few weeks, our class will be working on Descriptive Writing at the Advanced Level. The students will learn to write descriptions based on the five senses (hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and feeling), descriptions based on spatial order (top-to-bottom, near-to-far, front-left-behind-right), and descriptions that are personal responses to poems. When writing descriptions, the students will be using specific rather than general words to make a picture in the reader's mind. Besides learning to write descriptions, the students will learn to use a dictionary and a thesaurus to help them with their writing. They will also learn important language arts skills, including rules for grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.

Here are some things you and your child can do at home:

1. Together, shut your eyes and picture a time or place that has some special meaning for both of you. Perhaps it's a time of celebration or a day spent at a park or a fair. Take turns describing this time or place using the five senses. What did you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel? Try to use the most descriptive words you can think of. Enjoy bringing this memory to life. Don't be surprised if each of you remembers different things.
2. When your child brings home descriptions written at school, ask him or her to read them to you. Praise the work, and mention parts you think are especially well written. Talk about other descriptions your child might write.
3. Read aloud some descriptions from books. Talk about what makes a good description. Discuss what the writer does to make pictures in the reader's mind and what parts could use more or better description.
4. Good descriptive writing uses specific rather than general words. Play a game with general and specific words. Give your child a general word, and see how many specific words he or she can think of to replace it. For example, the word *run* can be replaced with *jog, race, rush, sprint, dash, trot, dart, hurry, speed, whisk, whiz, zip, zoom*, and so on. Some other general words are *pretty, bad, building, big, food, say, happy*. Take turns using specific words to describe something you see such as a bird in a tree (*tiny, light brown, striped, perching, twittering, hopping, bright-eyed, hungry*).
5. Provide a notebook for your child to use as a journal to record descriptions.

If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments about the writing we're doing at school, please feel free to call or meet with me.

Your child's teacher,
