

Have you ever heard the saying “a picture is worth a thousand words.”

The ability to describe something vividly is an essential skill for EVERY writer to master, no matter whether you're a journalist, blogger, novelist or copywriter.

The ability to draw the reader into your story is important because vivid descriptions transform your paragraphs from vague and boring to INTERESTING and MEMORABLE.

### **LET ME GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT I MEAN. TELL ME WHICH STORY GETS YOUR ATTENTION**

**EXAMPLE #1** You could see Larry Rubama's anger as he swung at the heavy bag that hung from the ceiling. It moved from side to side with each punch. Rubama, who is 6-foot-4 and 230 pounds, is known as a physical and menacing football player who brings fear to opposing players. And he'd hit anyone - on the field or off - who got in his way.

**EXAMPLE #2** The heavy bag **moaned** as Larry Rubama **hammered** away, Thud, thump, thwack!

The **rusty chain** that was holding the bag **squealed** as Rubama swung his **ham hock of a right arm** and clubbed the bag with his paw.

For all the questions that remain about Rubama, this much is certain to anyone who knows him or has crossed him: He's still a devastating hitter.

As a **hulking** linebacker with **sprinter's** speed at Landstown High School in Virginia Beach three years ago, he **slammed** running backs and **laid out** wide receivers. As a **boozed-up, doped-up wild man** on the club scene, he **bloodied** the face of anyone foolish enough to bump him and not apologize.

### **WHICH EXAMPLE WAS BETTER?**

How many of you have read "*The Great Gatsby*" by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald makes the New York of the 1920s come alive. When he described one of Gatsby's parties, you feel like you are weaving in and out of the crowds and could almost hear the jazz music spilling across the gardens.

When you write descriptively, you allow readers to clearly visualize your characters, the setting, and the scene.

You want the reader to feel like they are there or that you can see it clearly.

## **EXAMPLES**

\*He wraps his ashy knuckles around the dark red cherry stick that sat upon his burnt brown desk.

\*She lives in a 2,000-square foot room on the fifth floor of sprawling downtown condo.

\*Sitting on his living room table were seven empty bottles of vodka and merlot, red plastic cups and a deck of moldy playing cards which stench with mildew.

\*His boots crunched in the desert sand on the mountainside. Beside him was his longtime college friend, who slowly trudged upward.

## **SO HOW DO YOU PAINT WITH WORDS**

A master writer uses care and precision in their writing process to craft strong images, memories, or feelings to mind. The writer pays careful attention to detail.

If you type a verb or adjective that doesn't quite give you what you're looking for, use a thesaurus to help you.

Emphasize action words. Action words help your reader understand what your characters are actually doing.

### **Some other things to keep in mind when you're trying to find the right words.**

**Describe what you see.** Pay attention to the details you want the reader to notice and ignore the unimportant details. For example, if you're writing about a tree, you want to focus on the details of the tree and leave out too much detail about the tree's surroundings. **EXAMPLE** “**The dull-gray birch tree swayed in the breeze,**” calls attention to the tree.

**Describe what you hear.** Pay attention to all of the sounds happening in the scene. As a writer, it's your job to get the reader to tune in to the sounds you want them to hear. Consider all of the available sounds in your scene. For example, if you're describing a busy apartment complex, you might hear people talking or arguing through the walls, a car honking in the parking lot, or the sound of

muffled music coming from the apartment below. All of these sounds help paint the scene in your reader's mind. **EXAMPLE** “The screech of an owl pierced the silence in the field.”

**Describe what you touch or feel.** This is important if you're describing a character's experience of touching an object. You might talk about the vinyl arms of the dentist's chair, or the vibration of the drill on the patient's teeth. **EXAMPLE:** “Bruce picked up the rock and held it. From the ground it had looked smooth, but in his hands, it was rough and covered in a slimy film.”

**Describe what you taste.** You could describe the slimy taste of unbrushed teeth or the burning sensation of mouthwash. **EXAMPLE:** “The workers arrived every morning at 4 a.m., and each morning they were greeted with thick curtains of black dust and soot that coated their tongues, so that they could taste their own deaths approaching day-by-day.”

**Describe what you smell.** Smell is the strongest sense associated with memory, so describing smells is a good opportunity to get your reader to picture a scene in their minds. If your character is walking in New York City, you might write about the smell of hotdogs or urine, or the sudden whiff of garbage or sewage as they turn a corner. **EXAMPLE:** “A fire burned in the

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distance and Robin could smell the that it was seeded with pine  
and oak.”