

## Show Don't Tell

**Description:** Readers don't like to be hit over the head with explanation and they won't necessarily believe or feel what you feel, unless you make it real for them. An old adage in writing classes is "show don't tell." The idea is, give concrete, descriptive details instead of vague broad statements.

**Directions:** For each of the sentences below, make up your own sentence that "shows" instead of "tells." Use the hints *in italics* to help you.

1. I was so excited! *Describe what you were so excited about and/or your reaction.*
2. It was fun! *Describe what was "fun."*
3. I was sad. *Describe what made you sad and/or how you showed your sadness.*
4. The beach was awesome. *Describe the beach or what went on there.*
5. The scenery was amazing! *Describe the scenery.*
6. The computer was messed up. *Describe what the computer was doing.*
7. Her outfit was ugly. *Describe her outfit.*
8. It was delicious! *Describe the food.*
9. It was scary. *Describe what was scary and/or your reactions*

# Sensory Details

In descriptive writing, use **sensory details** that *show* rather than tell. Sensory details elaborate your main idea, showing readers how the scene is experienced through the senses. These details can come from your memory, imagination, observation, or research and can appeal to any of the five senses: sight, smell, touch, hearing, or taste.

## A. Choosing Appropriate Sensory Details

Imagine that you are writing a description of a time at the beach when you truly enjoyed yourself. The following is a list of the details from your prewriting notes. ~~Draw a line through the three details that would be least likely~~ to help you create a mood of enjoyment and relaxation. **Then write three more details that you could use** in your composition.

1. The slick surface of a surfboard
2. Bright splashes of color on beach towels
3. The putrid stench of dead fish
4. Sharp objects imbedded in the sand
5. The thud of fists against a volleyball
6. The tight, pulling pain of sunburned skin
7. The cool sweetness of frozen yogurt

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

## B. Writing a Descriptive Paragraph

Using the appropriate sensory details in Exercise A, write a descriptive paragraph about a relaxing, fun-filled day at the beach. Use your details to elaborate on a single main idea.

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