

Organizational Themes and Writing Skills

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Unit 1

Describing Things and Places:

My favorite ...

Moving, EVERYTHING MUST SELL

Leaving Japan, MUST SELL EVERYTHING: Macintosh notebook computer, Sony portable TV, comfortable Italian leather sofa, modern dining room table, circular green rug, Fuji mountain bicycle, large wooden bookcase, lots more. Call Linda after 6 p.m. at 74-4114.

Sale: bed, camera, bicycle, toys, computer, books, sofa, table and chairs. Sunday. Use Ueno Station North Exit - follow signs.

Large antique chest for sale - a real collector's item. Lacquered cherry wood; polished brass handles on three drawers. Individual seller; email for appointment: J. Tanaka at jtanaka@crazy.jp

Used Car for Sale: A real bargain!!! BMW four-door luxury sedan. Spacious and luxurious interior with all the extras: CD / TV / navigation system, fully adjustable seats, hybrid gasoline / electrical engine ...

Do these advertisements use complete sentences?
What sort of information do you get from these ads?

1 Describing Things with Modifiers

Words that describe are modifiers.

Write appropriate modifiers in the spaces below.

a. yellow - light blue

g. British - Italian

m. enormous - tiny

b. several - (half) a dozen

h. new - used

n. folding - rolling

c. traditional – contemporary	i. woolen – cotton	o. unique - ordinary
d. circular – rectangular	j. faded - bright	p. inexpensive-expensive
e. portable – stationary	k. plastic – wooden	q. scratched - shiny
f. handmade – manufactured	l. imported – domestic	r. 2005 – new model

ORIGIN _____ AGE _____ MATERIAL _____
 COLOR/SHAPE/SIZE _____ QUANTITY/COST _____
 CONDITION/QUALITY _____ KIND/ SPECIAL FEATURE _____

Use modifiers to write about the following objects and combine in the lower space.

a coat

color _____
 kind _____

a study desk

condition _____
 material _____

a purse or tote / carry bag

material _____

Extended Description

Read the following description and then write about something you have: a backpack or a purse, a desk or a bookshelf, a bicycle or ...

My briefcase is black and made of very tough nylon. It has a main storage space that has a top zipper and is large enough to hold several A4-size notebooks or a notebook computer. It has a flap that comes over the front and can be attached at the bottom, and this flap has a big zipper pocket on the front. There is a zipper pocket on the back too. There is a handle on the top and it also has an adjustable shoulder strap.

2 Describing Places

Paragraph 1

Hawaii was great. The weather was fantastic, the beaches were wonderful and the waves were impressive. The views of the mountains and craters were fabulous. The valleys and waterfalls were indescribable.

Paragraph 2

Hawaii was as beautiful as it always is. From our balcony we could enjoy a view of the sparkling waves with the long curve of the sunlit beaches. Looking out to sea, the water was a deep blue. Behind the hotel we could see the steep, green mountains rising up against the bright blue sky. We caught glimpses of majestic silvery waterfalls emerging from deeply shadowed valleys, above which we could see delicate mist hovering over colorful rainbows. As we looked further upward, the lush forest was replaced with a rocky landscape. We knew that this fabulous panorama was only an introduction to the beauty of the other islands.

Write down the descriptions from the paragraphs.

	Paragraph 1	Paragraph 2
beach and waves	<hr/>	<hr/>
waterfalls and valleys	<hr/>	<hr/>
mountains and sky	<hr/>	<hr/>
forest and landscape	<hr/>	<hr/>

3 Subjective and Objective Modifiers

The modifiers in **paragraph 1** reflect an impression of the place. They are subjective and universal—they can be used for anything. The descriptions in **paragraph 2** describe the place on the basis of objective, descriptive and specific details.

Mark the following as objective (O) or subjective (S).

_____ a Renaissance-period church	_____ a gloomy beach
_____ busy streets	_____ the tallest mountain
_____ a rectangular garden	_____ majestic trees
_____ a romantic café	_____ an ugly view

Circle the modifier that best describes the atmosphere of the places below in your mind.

1. A playground is a

peaceful
frightening
lively

place.

2. A cemetery is a[n]

peaceful
eerie
romantic

place.

3. A festival is a[n]

gloomy
exciting
dangerous

place.

4. A coffee shop is a[n]

dangerous
friendly
exciting

place.

A description of a place may change with the conditions, such as the season, weather or time of day.

Complete these sentences.

1. On a sunny day, the beach is _____.
2. During a typhoon, the beach would be _____.
3. The beach is a _____ place at sunset.
4. In the middle of winter, the beach is _____.

4 Supporting Descriptions

A description of a place should be supported with examples.

A church is an emotional place during a funeral. The organ music is slow and solemn and the mourners, all dressed in black, speak in hushed tones. People who had been close to the deceased sit watching the ceremony crying softly. All have come to say farewell to someone now gone.

During a wedding, a church is a festive place. Bright flowers are set all around the inside of the church and everyone is dressed in their finest clothes. People chatter excitedly before the ceremony and any tears that fall are tears of joy. And everyone is waiting to hear the words, 'You may now kiss the bride'—especially the groom.

Think of a place. Write a paragraph describing the place depending on the time, circumstance, event, and so on as these influence the place.

5 Critical Description

After reading the following paragraphs, which of the following houses would you rather live in? Underline the descriptive characteristics.

Paragraph 1

The house had been advertised as a ‘good buy’ and was impressive at first glance. It was two-stories with large windows and a newly painted exterior. However, once inside, I was disappointed. The entryway was dirty and it was obvious that it had not been cared for properly. The wallpaper in every room was peeling or worn and scratched. The kitchen was small and had not been cleaned well. The area around the sink was moldy and smelled terrible. The stove was rusty and parts were broken. The floor squeaked in many places and many of the lights did not work. The tatami in the Japanese-style room was stained and tattered. There were also water stains on the ceiling of second floor, which made me think that the roof was damaged. Although the selling price was quite cheap, I thought I would keep looking.

Paragraph 2

The house had been advertised as a ‘good buy’ and was impressive at first glance. It was a two-story house with large windows and a newly-painted exterior. Indeed, once inside, I was excited. The inside of the house was bright and clean and it was obvious that it had been well taken care of. The windows allowed natural light to come in everywhere. The kitchen was spacious and clean. Everything was scrubbed and the sink and stove sparkled. The floor had a recent coat of wax and the carpets were clean. The tatami in the Japanese-style room was in good condition. I was convinced that the house was in good condition and I decided to buy it right there.

Write a critical description about a building you know.

6 Writing Assignment

Choose one of the following themes and write a paragraph.

Write about an object. Use one of the following statements as your topic sentence and then prepare the content, the vocabulary and the outline and write your paragraph.

- ① One of my favorite possessions is _____.
- ② I had never seen a _____ like that before.
- ③ If I could have my ideal _____, it would ...

Write about an area (Shinjuku, Kyoto), a place (a city park, an airport or station, a university campus, a coffee shop), or your home or apartment. Your topic sentence should reflect the content of your paragraph, for example a critical description:

- ① The (best / worst / _____ est) (park / station) I have ever been is ...
- ② I love / hate (place: my apartment, Tokyo station).