



A description should include carefully chosen, precise words to help your readers picture the topic.

Read this news article about a fire. Then read the revision. Underline the words in the revision that give a more accurate description of the event.

Draft**Fire at Factory**

Late last night, some emergency vehicles went to a fire at the Sweets Candy Factory on Main Street. A call came into the fire station late. The caller smelled something and thought that there might be something wrong at the factory. Within minutes, people arrived at the factory. Flames were coming from windows as smoke rose from the roof. People went into the building. Other people aimed hoses at the roof of the big building. Because the night was cold, ice began to cover the sidewalk. People fell as they tried to put out the fire. When it was finally over, there wasn't much left. However, the owners of the factory plan to begin rebuilding in a few months.

Revision**Candy Factory Consumed by Blaze**

Late last night, five fire trucks and one ambulance sped to a raging fire at the Sweets Candy Factory on Main Street. A call came into the fire station just after midnight. The worried caller smelled burning chocolate and thought there might be a fire at the factory. Within minutes, firefighters and other emergency workers arrived at the factory. Huge yellow flames were shooting from windows as thick black smoke curled from the roof. Firefighters rushed into the brick building. More firefighters aimed enormous hoses at the roof of the five-story building. Because the temperature was below zero, ice began to cover the sidewalk. Firefighters slipped and fell as they scrambled to put out the inferno. When it was finally over, nothing remained but charred, crumbling ruins. However, the owners of the factory plan to begin rebuilding in June.



Make your descriptions precise by using specific adjectives instead of vague ones.

A. Read this journal entry. Then:

- Circle the commas after introductory words and phrases.
- Underline any adjectives that seem vague or boring to you.

Thursday, March 4 — This morning, the weather was cold and rainy. I wore an old raincoat but carried a nice umbrella as I walked to the bus stop. Under a big tree, a group of unhappy kids stood waiting for the bus. I joined them under the tree.

Eventually, the bus arrived. I climbed the steps and sat down on a bad seat next to a nice girl from my street. She was wearing a raincoat, too, but she had still gotten soaking wet. Her nice hair was dripping all over her books. Suddenly, I realized how wet I was, too! Water had dripped down my back, and my good sneakers squished when I stood up to get off the bus. Of course, the rain stopped as soon as we were inside the school building. I had to spend the rest of the day in cold, wet shoes!

B. List some descriptive adjectives or phrases that the writer could have used to better describe the following objects or people in the journal entry.

1. raincoat _____
2. umbrella _____
3. tree _____
4. kids _____
5. bus seat _____
6. girl _____
7. hair _____
8. sneakers _____



Choose specific nouns and adjectives to make your descriptions more precise.

Read this description of a person. Then:

- Replace the vague adjectives and general nouns with better words that could provide a more accurate description.
- Add commas after introductory words or phrases.

My Aunt Nora

Last week Aunt Nora arrived at our house for a family dinner. She was wearing a bright jacket and skirt. Everyone who meets Aunt Nora notices her clothes and her jewelry. For example she always wears necklaces and stuff. She also wears crazy shoes, and her pretty hair is usually hidden under a hat decorated with different things. My mom says that Aunt Nora likes to make a “fashion statement” wherever she goes.

At the dinner table Aunt Nora passed around one of her famous casseroles. It smelled good, but I couldn’t tell exactly what was in it. I was afraid it might be something gross! Unfortunately Aunt Nora always brings a “casserole surprise” to family dinners.

Aunt Nora chatted all through dinner, just like she does at every meal. She talked about things in her unusual voice and waved her hands to show off her colored fingernails. One thing is for sure — Aunt Nora is never boring. In fact she is my favorite aunt!



Choose specific nouns and adjectives to make your descriptions more precise.

- A. Use these questions to help you plan a descriptive paragraph about one of your favorite people. Be sure to use vivid adjectives and precise nouns in your answers.

Who is this person? _____

How would you describe his or her personality? _____

What is the first thing that someone would notice about this person? _____

How would you describe this person's appearance? _____

What kind of clothes does this person wear? _____

What is the most important thing you want your reader to know about this person?

Why is this person one of your favorite people? _____

- B. Trade papers with a partner. Have your partner circle any vague adjectives or general nouns you may have used. Then replace them with more precise words.

Refer to pages 6 and 7 to introduce or review the writing trait.

DAY 1

Read the rule aloud. Then guide students through the activity.

- Have students read the draft. Ask: *Do the words in this article give precise, specific details?* If students think so, ask: *What kind of emergency vehicles went to the fire? How many?* (not specified)
- Have students read the revision. Call attention to the first sentence and have students underline the phrase that tells how many and what kind of emergency vehicles there were. Then have students work independently to underline the other specific words and phrases that were added to the article. Afterward, go over the answers, having students identify the words in the draft that were replaced in the revision.
- **Convention:** Point out the comma after "Late last night" at the beginning of the article. Explain: *The comma separates this phrase from the rest of the sentence.* Help students find the commas after the other introductory words or phrases in the article. (**Within minutes, However**) You may also want to point out the commas after the dependent clauses. ("Because the temperature..." and "When it was finally over...")

DAY 2

Read the rule aloud. Say: *Vague words, such as nice or bad, don't give your reader enough information.* Then guide students through the activities.

- **Activity A:** After students read the entry, say: *The events are easy to follow, but a lot of the details aren't very clear. For example, the writer describes the raincoat as old, but does that give you enough to picture it?* Have students underline other adjectives that they think could be more specific.
- **Convention:** Say: *A comma after an introductory word or phrase is not always necessary, but sometimes it helps the reader.* Have students circle the commas.
- **Activity B:** Use the first word to model completing the activity. Ask: *What better, more specific words could we use to describe a raincoat? How old is it? What makes it look old?* After students complete the activity, ask volunteers to share their answers. Make sure students haven't replaced vague words with other vague words. (e.g., cool, interesting)

Name: _____

Week 1 • Day 1



A description should include carefully chosen, precise words to help your readers picture the topic.

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Draft

Fire at Factory

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Revision

Candy Factory Consumed by Blaze

Late last night five fire trucks and one ambulance sped to a raging fire at the Sweets Candy Factory on Main Street. A call came into the fire station just after midnight. The worried caller smelled burning chocolate and thought there might be a fire at the factory. Within minutes firefighters and other emergency workers arrived at the factory. Huge yellow flames were shooting from windows as thick black smoke curled from the roof. Firefighters rushed into the brick building. More firefighters aimed anemous hoses at the roof of the five-story building. Because the temperature was below zero, ice began to cover the sidewalk. Firefighters slipped and fell as they scrambled to put out the inferno. When it was finally over, nothing remained but charred, crumbling ruins. However, the owners of the factory plan to begin rebuilding in June.

Name: _____

Week 1 • Day 2



Make your descriptions precise by using specific adjectives instead of vague ones.

A. Read this journal entry. Then:

- Circle the commas after introductory words and phrases.
- Underline any adjectives that seem vague or boring to you.

Thursday, March 4 — This morning the weather was cold and rainy. I wore an old raincoat but carried a nice umbrella as I walked to the bus stop. Under a big tree, a group of unhappy kids stood waiting for the bus. I joined them under the tree.


Eventually the bus arrived. I climbed the steps and sat down on a bad seat next to a nice girl from my street. She was wearing a raincoat, too, but she had still gotten soaking wet. Her nice hair was dripping all over her books. Suddenly I realized how wet I was, too. Water had dripped down my back, and my good sneakers squished when I stood up to get off the bus. Of course the rain stopped as soon as we were inside the school building. I had to spend the rest of the day in cold, wet shoes!

B. List some descriptive adjectives or phrases that the writer could have used to better describe the following objects or people in the journal entry.

Sample Answers:

- raincoat yellow, dirty, ragged
- umbrella flowered, rainbow-colored, bright orange
- tree giant maple
- kids cold, tired, grumpy
- bus seat lumpy, ripped, full of holes
- girl friendly, in eighth grade
- hair long, curly, black
- sneakers brand new, white

Name: _____ **Week 1 • Day 3**

 **Word Choice** Choose specific nouns and adjectives to make your descriptions more precise.

Read this description of a person. Then:

- Replace the vague adjectives and general nouns with better words that could provide a more accurate description.
- Add commas after introductory words or phrases.

Sample Answers: My Aunt Nora

Last week, Aunt Nora arrived at our house for a family dinner. She was wearing a ~~bright~~ ^{hot pink} jacket and skirt. Everyone who meets Aunt Nora notices her clothes and her jewelry. For example, she always wears necklaces and ~~big~~ ^{sparkly rings} ~~pointy pink pumps~~ ^{long silver} shoes. She also wears ~~expensive~~ ^{cherry} shoes, and her ~~pretty~~ ^{spiky} hair is usually hidden under a hat decorated with ~~different things~~ ^{cherries and plastic flowers}. My mom says that Aunt Nora likes to make a "fashion statement" wherever she goes.

At the dinner table, Aunt Nora passed around one of her famous casseroles. It smelled ~~good~~ ^{spicy}, but I couldn't tell exactly what was in it. I was afraid it might be ~~something gross~~ ^{curried snails}. Unfortunately, Aunt Nora always brings a "casserole surprise" to family dinners.

Aunt Nora chatted all through dinner, just like she does at every meal. She talked about ~~things~~ ^{politics and art} in her ~~unusual~~ ^{high-pitched} voice and waved her hands to show off her ~~colorful~~ ^{fluorescent orange} finger-paints. One thing is for sure — Aunt Nora is never boring. In fact, she is my favorite aunt!

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DAY 3

Read the rule aloud. Say: *When we talk to our friends, we often use general nouns such as **things** and **stuff**, but precise nouns are better to use in writing because they are more interesting and they tell the reader more.* Then guide students through the activity.


- Have students read the description. To model the activity, say: *Look at the word **bright** in the second sentence. What does that mean? How was the jacket bright? Was it sparkly? A bright color? What color?*
- **Convention:** Remind students that we often use a comma after an introductory word or phrase because it makes our sentences easier to read. Have students complete the activity.
- Have volunteers read aloud their revised descriptions. Discuss how each student's choice of words made the revision tell more about Aunt Nora. Check to be sure that students inserted commas in the correct places.

DAY 4

Review the rule. Then guide students through the activities.

- **Activity A:** To help students choose a subject, ask: *Who are some of your favorite people? What makes them special? Who would be fun to write about?* Have students answer the questions. Circulate to assist as necessary, reminding students to be precise and descriptive.
- **Activity B:** Have students exchange papers. Say: *Read your partner's answers to the questions. Do you see any vague adjectives or general nouns? Do you have any more questions about the person being described?* Have students' partners discuss the vague adjectives and general nouns and offer suggestions about how to make them specific.

Name: _____ **Week 1 • Day 4**

 **Word Choice** Choose specific nouns and adjectives to make your descriptions more precise.

A. Use these questions to help you plan a descriptive paragraph about one of your favorite people. Be sure to use vivid adjectives and precise nouns in your answers. **Sample Answers:**

Who is this person? my big sister.

How would you describe his or her personality? outgoing, daring, fun to be with.

What is the first thing that someone would notice about this person? her long, straight blond hair.

How would you describe this person's appearance? short, athletic.

What kind of clothes does this person wear? jeans, flip flops, T-shirts.

What is the most important thing you want your reader to know about this person? She's always ready to try something new and crazy.

Why is this person one of your favorite people? She's a lot of fun, and we have many adventures together.

B. Trade papers with a partner. Have your partner circle any vague adjectives or general nouns you may have used. Then replace them with more precise words.

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DAY 5

Writing Prompt

- Write a description of one of your favorite people. Use precise nouns and vivid adjectives.
- Be sure to use a comma after introductory words and phrases.