

The Writing Center & Reading/Study Skills Lab presents:  
**Tip Sheet on: Descriptive Essays**

Adapted from Evergreen Sixth Edition by Fawcett/Sandberg

To **describe** something—a person, a place, or an object—is to capture it in words so others can imagine it or see it in their mind’s eye.

The best way for a writer to help the reader get a clear impression is to use language that appeals to the senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. For it is through the senses that human beings experience the physical world around them, and it is through the senses that the world is most vividly described.

**Example of a Descriptive Essay**

On November 27, 1922, when archaeologist Howard Carter unsealed the door to the ancient Egyptian tomb of King Tut, he stared in amazement at the fantastic objects heaped all around him. On his left lay the wrecks of at least four golden chariots. Against the wall on his right sat a gorgeous chest brightly painted with hunting and battle scenes. Across from him was a gilded throne with cat-shaped legs, arms like winged serpents, and a back showing King Tut and his queen. Behind the throne rose a tall couch decorated with animal faces that were half hippopotamus and half crocodile. The couch was loaded with more treasures. To the right of the couch, two life-sized statues faced each other like guards. They were black, wore gold skirts and sandals, and had cobras carved on their foreheads. Between them was a second sealed doorway. Carter’s heart beat loudly. Would the mummy of King Tut lie beyond it?

\*\*\*\*\*

*This paragraph, like many descriptive paragraphs, is organized according to “space order.” The author uses transitional expressions that show where things are.*

- To the left:** chariots; wrecked; golden
- To the right:** a gorgeous chest; brightly painted with hunting and battle scenes
- Across the room:** a throne; gilded; cat-shaped legs; arms like winged serpents
- Behind the throne:** a couch; decorated with faces that were ..

**Transitional Expressions Indicating Place**

Next to,	near	on top, beneath,	close, far	above, below
Up, down, between		toward, away,	front, back,	middle

MCC offers a Writing Center & Reading/Study Skills Lab at both the Bedford and Lowell campuses. Professional tutoring is available weekdays and some evenings, at no charge. Schedules are posted on the doors. Drop in or make an appointment. In Bedford: AR 214, Tel: 781-280-3727. In Lowell: City Campus Room 406B, Tel: 978-656- 3365