

Making Sense of it ALL



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Why bother?



- Writers employ the five senses to engage a reader's interest. If you want your writing to jump off the page, you must bring your reader into the world you are creating.
- When describing a past event, remember what you saw, heard, touched, smelled, and tasted, then incorporate that into your writing.
- Sensory details are used in any great story. Think about your favorite movie. What types of sounds and images are used? What do your favorite characters taste, smell, and touch? Without sensory details, stories will fail to come to life.

Rediscover the beauty



- It's time to reignite our creativity, engage our senses, and discover how to bring our writing alive.
- It's easy to lose the beauty of the moment, to ignore the senses, to forget to enjoy the small things, and to overlook the sweetness of simplicity. But these can make your writing full and vibrant.

Group exercise: Let's rediscover the beauty of today. Write every sensory experience you've had today.

Vivid writing



Without sensory details

- I went to the store and bought some flowers. Then I headed to the meat department. Later I realized I forgot to buy bread.

With sensory details

- Upon entering the grocery store, I headed directly for the flower department, where I spotted yellow tulips. As I tenderly rested the tulips in my rusty shopping cart, I caught a whiff of minty dried eucalyptus, so I added the fragrant forest green bouquet of eucalyptus to my cart. While heading for the meat department, I smelled the stench of seafood, which made my appetite disappear. I absently grabbed a bloody red hunk of NY Strip and tossed it into my cart. Pushing my creaky shopping cart to the checkout line, I heard an employee announce over the PA that there was a special on shrimp. On the ride home, I realized I had forgotten to buy the crusty wheat bread I like so much.

Applying the senses



Senses about a summer's day on the beach:

- **Visual** children playing in the sand, people lying on the beach and swimming in the water, sparkling sand with white-speckled shells, water meeting the blue sky at the horizon, lifeguards, a hot dog stand
- **Sounds** chatter and laughter, talking, a lifeguard whistle, lapping of waves, splashing
- **Smells** ocean air, fishy smell, whiff of roasting hot dogs, scent of suntan lotion
- **Tastes** salt water, hot dogs, salty sweat
- **Feelings/Textures** heat of sun, sweat, cool water, and towel on skin, sand between toes

Sensory details matter



Don't settle for simply what you see. No sense is more important than another. It all depends on the scene you're trying to create.

- Sight: What does something look like?
- Sound: What do you hear in the distance?
- Touch: What does an object feel like?
- Smell: How does it smell?
- Taste: What does the meal taste like?

Group contest: Write every sense word you can about a spring day.

Paint a picture



Use simile and metaphors. When sensory details are used, your readers can personally experience whatever you're trying to describe, reminding them of their own experiences. They also give a lyrical beauty to writing.

- Simile uses "like" or "as". The river is as calm as glass. The river sparkled like a bed of gemstones.
- Metaphor compares something without using "like" or "as". His voice was a gentle rain to my soul.
- Do: paint a picture using common imagery.
- Don't: overuse them

Show v. tell



Using sensory words to show rather than tell.

- She was sad.
- She sighed deeply, her eyes staring a hole in the floor, while her mouth turned down into a subtle pout.

Group exercise: Write every simile or metaphor you can think of about a spring day.

Fill the longing



- Every reader longs for more to awaken her senses, touch her soul, stir her emotions, and change her heart.
- They want to be transported into another time and place and learn from the lives of others, even if they are fictional characters who live across the street from them.
- Let the readers experience your story world as you develop our characters and setting scene-by-scene. Many of us will never go to Ireland, cross the great Atlantic Ocean or live on an island. Most of us haven't grown up in a family of eleven children in a one-bedroom Irish cottage.

- QUESTIONS? THOUGHTS?