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Concrete sensory details examples

Thank you for your participation! For full functionality of this site it is necessary to enable JavaScript. Here are the instructions for enabling JavaScript in your web browser. Sensory language spices up your writing and allows readers to experience your words as if they’re living your story. You can use sensory words in any type of writing, including business writing.

How to use sensory details

Aarggh ...A thumping headache.Does it ever happen to you?You should work, but you can’t. You don’t want to deal with your to-do list, an overflowing inbox, an incessant stream of tweets. You find your walking boots and get out.The smell of rain lingers in the air. A gentle breeze soothes your aching head.

You watch the sun rays play with the golden leaves.Can you picture the scene? That’s because of the sensory details.You might think that sensory words are for poets and novelists. For creative spirits. Not for serious business people like you and me. But that’s not true. Using sensory language can help you captivate your audience—a business audience, too. Sensory language helps readers experience your words, almost as if they’re present, right in the middle of your story. What’s more, sensory details add personality and flavor to boring content, helping you stand out in a sea of grey voices that all sound the same. Shall I explain?The science behind sensory words

Sensory words are more powerful and memorable than ordinary words because they make your reader see, hear, smell, taste, or feel your words. When reading non-sensory words, your brain processes text. But when you read sensory words different areas of your brain light up. Your brain processes sensory words as if you taste a sweet cake, as if you see a dazzling display of colors, as if you feel a rough texture. And we also know from research that when we can hold a product the desire for the product increases. Might we be able to increase desire simply by using sensory words so people can imagine holding our products?Sensory words can even boost sales. Research into menus suggests that describing dishes using sensory words makes more people buy them. So, sensory words are truly magic. What are sensory words?Sensory words are descriptive—they describe how we experience the world: how we smell, see, hear, feel or taste something. Words related to sight indicate colors, shape, or appearance. For instance: gloomy, dazzling, bright, foggy, gigantic. Words related to touch describe textures. You can use them to describe feelings and abstract concepts, too: gritty, creepy, slimy, fluff, sticky. Words related to hearing describe sounds. For instance: crashing, thumping, piercing, tingling, squeaky. Often these words mimic sounds—that’s when they’re called onomatopoeic. Taste and smell are closely related. Most taste and smell words are easy substitutes for bland words like good, nice, or bad. For instance: zesty, tantalizing, sweet, stinky, stale. Motion is sensory, too. By using active words or describing movement, you help your readers experience your words. For instance: vibrating, soaring, mind-boggling, staggering, bumpy. You can create a multi-sensory experience in your writing. Here’s an example from Benjamin Myers’ book *The Offing*: Sitting here now by the open window, a glissando of birdsong on the very lightest of breezes that carries with it the scent of a final incoming summer, I cling to poetry as I cling to life. Within one sentence Myers shares a visual detail (the open window), an auditory detail (a glissando of birdsong), a sense of motion and touch (the lightest breeze), and a sense of smell (the scent of the incoming summer). But sensory words are not just for novels. ...How to appeal to the senses in business writing

In business writing, we don’t need to write sentences as poetic as Myers’ sentence above. We can add a touch of poetry by using one or two sensory words—to make our writing more vivid and to shape a stronger writing voice. You can find opportunities to use sensory words almost everywhere—in headlines and email subject lines, on your About page, in product descriptions, business emails, or e-newsletters. For instance: Sensory details inject a dose of personality into your writing. They make your writing stand out, and help readers picture the scenes you’re describing. Amplify your words with sound symbolism

There’s a little-known category of words that can make your writing even more expressive. You may have heard of onomatopoeic words? Onomatopoeic words express a sound such as to squeal, whoosh, or boom! But there’s a different, more subtle category of words. Words with sound symbolism are associated with a specific sensory experience. For his master’s thesis, James Harbreck studied such words and found that their usage has been increasing over the last two centuries. Harbreck mentions examples like: Words starting with gl- are associated with light, such as glint or glimmer. Words ending with -irl or -url often relate to circular or spiral motion or shape such as curl, swirl, whirl, or twirl. Words ending with -ump tend to be associated with roundness or heaviness, such as lump, clump, hump, or rump. According to Harbreck, words with sound symbolism (more here) are used more regularly in fiction than non-fiction. But we can change that. We can use such words to make our writing glitter and glow more brightly. The truth about captivating your audience? You can use the same words every business writer uses. It’s a quick way to write a lot of text. But you sound the same as everyone else, and the noisy internet machine drowns out your words. Your message gets lost. So, try to release your inner poet and pick your words with care and precision. Make your readers crave your next article. Get them to fall in love with your writing, and get them to fall in love with your voice. A list of 75 sensory phrases

Sensory language #1: Visual words

Sensory words for sight allow you to paint vibrant (or gloomy) pictures. What are you seeing? What’s the size? What’s the light like? What are the colors? Sensory language #2: Tactile words

Sensory words for touch allow readers to sense the silky-smoothness of your words. How does something feel when you touch it? What’s the texture? The temperature? How does the humidity or pressure of the air feel? Sensory language #3: Auditory words

Sensory words for hearing allow readers to hear what’s happening. How does someone’s voice sound? What kind of sounds are made? Is it loud or soft? Sensory language #4: Words related to taste and smell

Sensory words for taste and smell help you turn a bland text into lip-smackingly tasty writing. What kind of aroma is there? Is it natural or artificial? Strong or subtle? Pleasant or repulsive? And does something taste sweet, sour, savory, salty, or bitter? Sensory language #5: Motion words

When you use strong verbs to describe motion, readers experience the motion as if they’re there, too. Is the car swerving? Is the flight turbulent? Is the sea choppy? 5 books that showcase sensory writing

The books listed below showcase sensory writing. When you see how others use sensory details in their writing, it becomes easier to appeal to the senses in your own writing, too. To accelerate the learning process, pay attention to imagery in the text. How do the authors help you imagine the scenes they describe? Which smells, feelings, tastes, sounds, motions, and sights do they refer to? Which words do they use to describe those sensory experiences? Which words do you like best? Add your favorite sensory words to a list and see whether you can include them in your own writing. You can learn from any type of writing. If you’re writing about business, you can learn from fiction or science writing, too. The links below are affiliate links. If possible, please support your local bookstore.

1. A sensory novel
- Elif Shafak excels at sketching multi-sensory images to transport her readers to a different world. Here’s an example: The brothel where Leila worked was among the oldest in the area. A single fluorescent tube flickered at the entrance with the force of a thousand tiny matches catching light and burning one after another. The air was thickened by the scent of cheap perfume, the taps encrusted with deposits of limescale and the ceiling coated with the sticky brown stains of tobacco smoke. From: *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World* by Elif Shafak
2. A sensory business book
- Chip and Dan Heath are my favorite business writers. In their book *The Power of Moments*, they show how to weave miniature stories into your writing—even a business book. *The Power of Moments* explains why certain customer service experiences have extraordinary impact. Here’s an example of their writing: Let’s start with the cherry-red phone mounted to a wall near the pool. You pick it up and someone answers, “Hello, Popsicle Hotline.” You place an order, and minutes later, a staffer wearing white gloves deliver your cherry, orange, or grape Popsicles to you at poolside. On a silver tray. For free. From: *The Power of Moments* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath
3. A science book that appeals to the senses
- In his book *The Eloquence of the Sardine*, Bill Francois uses vivid imagery to show us what it’s like to be a fish. Here’s a snippet: Some fish emit sounds through their swim bladders, pouches of gas located in their abdomens that keep them neutrally buoyant. They use these swim bladders as a drum, like children who tap out rhythms on their bellies after eating, an unaccountable music we’ve all made at one time or another. Patting their bellies like this, with the help of special stomach muscles, drum fish croak, groupers grunt and gurnards rumble. Their sounds are reminiscent of foghorns, drum solos or TV game-show buzzers. From: *The Eloquence of the Sardine: The Secret Life of Fish & Other Underwater Mysteries* by Bill Francois, translated by Antony Shugaar
4. A nature book full of sensory language
- Braiding Sweetgrass by botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer mixes Native American wisdom with western science, plus lots of sensory descriptions of nature. Here’s a sample: You could smell ripe strawberries before you saw them, the fragrance mingling with the smell of sun on damp ground. It was the smell of June, the last day of school, when we were set free, and the Strawberry Moon, ode mini-gizis. I’d lie on my stomach in my favorite patches, watching the berries grow sweeter and bigger under the leaves. Each tiny wild berry was scarcely bigger than a raindrop, dimpled with seeds under the cap of leaves. From that vantage point I could pick only the reddest of the red, leaving the pink ones for tomorrow. From: *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer
5. A food memoir
- As Nina Mingya Powles shows in her book *Tiny Moons: A Year of Eating in Shanghai*, food writing isn’t just about describing taste and smell. Here’s a tiny taster: I eat my quatie right there, standing beneath the fluorescent lights. First the crunch, then hot soup scalds my tongue - I wasn’t expecting so much soup - then gingery, garlicky pork in the middle. From: *Tiny Moons: A Year of Eating in Shanghai* by Nina Mingya Powles

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