

(Exercise One) To practice using hyphenated adjectives, try completing the following:

- a. My mom/dad gave me one of her/his _____ lectures.
- b. I was so angry that I had a(n) _____ expression on my face.
- c. My best friend gave me one of his/her _____ looks.
- d. My coach gave me one of his/her _____ talks.

(Exercise Two) To practice, write a paragraph about a favorite pastime. Use a Magic 3 to describe your pastime. For added skill, include a hyphenated adjective and alliteration or assonance. Underline the Magic 3 and number each one where it begins.

(Exercise Three) To practice, try writing some similes of your own. Using the sentence starters below, finish them with a unique simile.

Remember to brainstorm the easiest comparisons (She was as beautiful as a rose. She was as beautiful as a freshly bloomed flower. She was as beautiful as a model on the cover of a magazine. She was as beautiful as a star in the sky.), then throw those clichés away and use something fresh for your simile.

1. He had been shot in the arm, and it hurt like . . .
2. She was so scared; it was like . . .
3. She was so beautiful; she looked like . . .

(Exercise Four) To practice personification, personify your favorite season. Write about the season as if it were a person so capitalize the name of the season just as you would a person's name. In your paragraph make sure you talk about what that season does to make it different from the other three. Make sure to include one original metaphor or one original simile in your paragraph. Include a Magic 3, a hyphenated adjective, and alliteration or assonance.

Example:

Moving briskly, Autumn paints the green trees of summer persimmon, burnt orange, and goldenrod. His paint palette provides the tools that dot the countryside with plump pumpkins, colorful Indian corn, and MacIntosh apples. Autumn breathes cool air to hasten the birds' departure for the South. The cool air provides respite from his brother Summer's I'm-angry-and-I'm-going-to-make-you-sweat-and-suffer persona. As Autumn sits back on a porch swing to admire his artistry, he congratulates himself on yet another landscape masterpiece.

(Exercise Five) Instead of using general, vague descriptions or “telling” instead of “showing”, specific sensory details help the reader visualize the person, place, thing, or idea.

To practice, describe a place you’ve visited or a favorite spot of yours. To be true imagery, appeal to at least three of the five senses as you describe this place.

Example:

I am sitting out on an old Dixieland porch in Mississippi. The American flag waves proudly. Making itself a web in the corner of the wrought-iron railing is a small black spider. The twin rocking chairs glide back and forth, and with each rickety rackety sound the chairs make, the rhythm continues. An emerald birdhouse sways in the wind, as the robins sing their never-ending song. Swooping down toward the nearby field, a crop duster exterminates the boll weevils on the cotton and turns the air a bit sour. I throw up a wave as a muddy 4 X 4 passes the farm. Down here in Mississippi we share Southern hospitality. Anyone’s welcome anytime to come sit on my Dixieland porch (Jordan Smith).

(Exercise Six) Writers often repeat specially chosen words or phrases to make a point or to stress certain ideas for their readers.

To practice, pick an emotion and describe it in action and repeat the emotion throughout the paragraph to emphasize it. You might even want to personify the emotion like the example and to include dialogue.

Example:

Envy is an ugly person. Envy rears her head when I least expect it. Envy starts whispering in my ear telling me, “Look at how beautiful those women are. Did you see that convertible Corvette Stingray with the red leather interior? Imagine how perfectly decorated that Mediterranean villa is. Oh, but you’ll never be able to afford any of that on your teacher’s salary.” Envy knows how to take a pleasant day and turn it into an unfulfilling one, and Envy knows how to leave me wishing about all of the handbags, bracelets, antique furniture, artwork, and books I don’t own but wish I did.

(Exercise Seven) Instead of speeding past a moment in the story, slow down and emphasize it by expanding or exploding the action so that readers clearly see what’s happening.

To practice, pick a sport, a physical activity, or a videogame to describe by expanding or exploding the action that takes place. The goal is to use strong action verbs.

The example below could have read:

I planted some flowers that will bloom in the spring.

Instead, I exploded the moment of the planting to show my reader exactly what I was doing.

Example: Placing my foot on the edge of the shovel, I push down with my arms and leg to get the blade to sink into the soil. Once it’s in, I tilt the handle back toward the ground and push until the earth is loosened. I dump the pile of soil onto the ground. When the digging is done, I bend down and grab clumps of earth and begin shaking away the loose dirt and returning any stray worms to their underground homes. The unneeded grass is deposited in my garbage sack. Then I till the ground to break up the clumps of sod and make the dirt smoother. Using my hand spade, I dig small holes in which to plant my tulip and daffodil bulbs. When all the bulbs are buried in their new beds for winter, I scrape off the shovel blade with a rock to protect it from rusting. Finally, I wait patiently for spring and for my flowers to bloom yellow, peach, fuchsia, lilac, and orange.