

Scott Editorial

Five Senses Scene Exercise

A practical worksheet for creating vivid, character-led description



Strong description is not about including every detail. It is about choosing the details that matter to your character. Use this exercise to make a scene feel more immediate and grounded without slowing it down with unnecessary description.

Choose your scene

Choose a scene from your manuscript that feels flat, rushed or difficult to picture.

Where is the character?

What is happening?

How is your character feeling at this point in the story?

Explore the five senses

Work through each sense from your character's point of view. You are gathering possibilities here, not trying to use everything.

SIGHT Light, movement, colour, distance, expressions, objects and small visual details.

Notes:

SOUND Background noise, voices, silence, rhythm, repetition or a sound that feels unusually prominent.

Notes: _____

SMELL Familiar or unfamiliar scents, something pleasant or unpleasant, or a smell that triggers an association.

Notes: _____

TOUCH Temperature, clothing, surfaces, weather, pain, pressure, texture or physical contact.

Notes: _____

TASTE Food, drink, smoke, blood, toothpaste, salt air or another taste that naturally belongs in the scene.

Notes: _____

Make it personal

Look back at your notes and choose the two or three details your character would be most likely to notice. Two people can enter the same room and notice completely different things.

- Someone waiting for a job interview might notice the ticking clock.
- Someone waiting for medical results might notice the antiseptic smell.
- Someone meeting an ex-partner might notice the empty chair opposite them.

The strongest details often reveal something about the character as well as the setting.

Which two or three details will you use, and why would your character notice them?

Rewrite

Rewrite 200–500 words of the scene using the sensory details you have chosen. Do not try to include all five senses. Let the details appear naturally through your character's experience.

Final check

- Can I picture the scene more clearly?
- Do the details feel natural rather than added for effect?
- Have I used the senses selectively?
- Does the description reveal something about the character?
- Have I strengthened the atmosphere without slowing the scene?

The aim is not to describe more. It is to make the reader experience more.