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**A Writing Exercise That Increases Awareness And Description Skills**

**By Catherine Franz**

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Practice attaching words to feelings requires time to do. Without a system that helps you monitor that time, the minutes or hours could feel unproductive. With the right exercise, you can then use that time wisely, as well as save you time and frustration.

Learning to apply the right words to our six senses is a top ingredient to the mixture of writing. Its language brings the reader into the story. All of us easily know how we feel, or what we're seeing (okay, most of the time), what we're hearing, smelling, tasting, and sensing, and can usually explain it in 50 words if pushed to do it. But, how do you describe it in one or two words without the pushing?

Also, by beginning with good material, the remaining part of the writing process becomes easier. This exercise will help you improve your beginning.

This is a simple exercise that you can do anywhere, anytime, in a space of minutes or longer. You can practice Monday mornings in the garden, the doctor's waiting room, or in the lunchroom. It can last as long as a television commercial (oops those aren't short any longer), or you more aggressively with a devoted 30-minutes a day. Whatever length of time or place you have, it will always improve your skill.

You will want to sit while completing this exercise.

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Okay, let's start with the most difficult spot, your supplies — paper and your writing instruments. Landscape, portrait, small, or regular size sheet of paper doesn't matter. I define what paper size to use by the amount of time available and my location. If I'm mobile, I use my small journal. If I'm at my desk or at home, I use a regular size paper. Sometimes lines, sometimes not. Sometimes the exercise flows over to two or three sheets. Don't limit the experience by paper size. Have fun with the recording tools as well. Experimentation is the key to our curiosity. And, curiosity is the foundation of a writer.

Draw a circle on the page and place your name in the center. Large, small, in color, black, or blue, again it doesn't matter. Use whatever flips your pancakes at that moment. In other words, whatever feels good at the time.

Your objective is to describe your five senses, six if you have that gift, with words. Write the words that express that sense in the space inside the circle randomly around your name.

Here is how you would use this exercise to increase environment awareness and description. Write your words in the location on the paper relevant to the direction it appears. For example: I'm sitting outside my office on a 9th floor balcony at the moment, I hear a heavy humming from the tires on the wet pavement below and birds chirping above me to the right. I would place the words for the tires on the bottom left and the chirping on the upper right on my page.

Here are nine prompts to help you expand your experience.

- \* Write words describing your atmosphere—the quality of air.
- \* What are the clouds doing? Can you see animals in their shapes?
- \* The temperature of your location.
- \* The source of light and its quality.
- \* Where are people standing or sitting?
- \* Shadows, are they're any? Where and how do they fall?
- \* Predominant colors, wall colors, wallpaper, molding, chair railing, textured ceiling.
- \* What do you smell? Using comparisons are a great way to relate to your reader. The air feels like just getting out

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of the fogged shower stall.

\* Are there other people around you? How do they smell, their clothes, their shoes? Guess at what they might do for a living. Are they dressed like someone on their way to work, doesn't work, a mom, dad, baker, or what?

After you are comfortable describing your environment, spice the exercise up another notch. Compare your descriptive words to something else. For example: The room you are sitting in feels like a sauna with my clothes on.

Continue spicing up the exercise to increase your awareness and descriptive powers—use people and objects. Since you are most familiar with yourself, begin there.

After practicing on the most familiar subject, yourself,

create a list of other familiar people in your life. Then sort the list from most familiar to least. Continue down the list. Somewhere during these lists and practice sessions, you will begin to feel comfortable with your skill.

You can continue taking the exercise to another level. This time you are ready to expand your awareness and adaptation to words. Visit the local mall; sit in the food court for smorgasbord of new enriching thoughts-to-words experiences.

Here are 11 prompts to help you expand your levels:

- \* Describe what you are wearing.
- \* How does your body feel?
- \* What are your hands doing?
- \* How does your throat feel?
- \* How are you holding your mouth?
- \* Eye movement
- \* Breathing
- \* How do you feel in general, in detail?
- \* Name your mood. Does it have a flavor and color?
- \* Describe your feelings with reference to music. A certain song or type of music.
- \* How does your hair smell, clothes, the chair you're sitting on, the book you're reading?

Be patient with yourself while practicing. This exercise isn't the easiest to complete, however, it is the most

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effective. Even if you aren't a writer, this exercise will help you triple your awareness skills in a short time period<sup>1</sup>. This exercise also helps police officers, speakers, judges, attorneys, or anyone else that uses their awareness skills to see and put it into words. This is also a NLP—neurolinguistics programming skill—for those aware of this process.

Catherine Franz provides writing and marketing assistance to individuals who want to write and businesses that want to increase business. For more ideas and programs, visit The Abundance Center at: <http://www.abundancecenter.com>

### **WRITING YOUR WRITING JOB DESCRIPTION**

**By Mary Anne Hahn**

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Have you ever heard about the "motivational" concept of writing your own obituary?

The idea is, you write what you would like your obit to say, by summarizing all those accomplishments that you most want to achieve during the course of your life. Motivation gurus suggest that this enables us to focus on what's most important to us, while discarding those activities that truly don't matter in the long run.

Along similar—but less morbid—lines, I believe that we writers might find it helpful if we took the time to write our own writing job descriptions. If we could lead the writing lives of our dreams, what types of writing would we be doing? Who would our customers and/or readers be? In what niches would we specialize? What would we consider to be our strongest skills, our areas of expertise?

Or let's say that you want to diversify your writing goals. You could develop a job description for each niche. In this way, you could identify the experience and skills you already possess, and which ones you still need to work on.

Here's an example: suppose one of your writing career goals involves writing profile articles—of celebrities, politicians, business leaders, scientists, or just ordinary people who do extraordinary things. What attributes would such a writer need to possess? Excellent interviewing skills, obviously. Research skills would help as well; you certainly wouldn't want to walk into the interview with

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absolutely no background knowledge of your interviewee or his/her subject matter. Attention to detail would come in handy, too. What is your interviewee wearing? What can you say about his smile, or her vocal qualities? What does the interviewee's home or office tell us about him?

So your profile writing job description might look like this:

**Job Title:** Profile Article Writer

**Job Description:** Interview famous, influential and or interesting people, and write article profiles on them for publication in local and national magazines.

**Skills/Experience Needed:** Excellent writing skills and attention to detail required. Experience in conducting interviews with people in a wide variety of occupations. Proven online and library research skills. Knowledge of publications with a track record of running article profiles.

Do you see how creating a writing job description for yourself might help direct you towards the kinds of writing assignments that you want to land? If so, spend some time today developing your own.

Mary Anne Hahn is editor and publisher of WriteSuccess, the free biweekly ezine of ideas, information and inspiration for people who want to launch and maintain successful writing careers. To subscribe, [mailto: writesuccess-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:writesuccess-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)



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