

A2 Description

1 Types of description

Many different subjects require students to write descriptions. Engineering or architecture students may have to describe objects or structures, literature students the plot of a novel, while psychology or science students often describe experiments. Law students will describe court cases and business students describe organisations. Clearly describing a process such as a court case is different from describing a static structure such as a bridge. But in all situations students need to focus on the key elements to make their descriptions clear, without involving excessive detail.

2 Key elements

If you were describing a building, what would be the most important elements to mention? Add to the list below.

location
size
age
function
materials
colour

A description based on the first six elements would read:

The three storey office block on the corner of Station Road is 30 m. wide and 12 m. high. It was built in 1979 of red brick with a pitched roof of grey concrete tiles.

This is quite a basic description, but might be adequate for some purposes. However, in some situations more detail could be needed:

The three storey office block on the corner of Station Road is 30 m. wide and 12 m. high. It was built in 1979 of red brick with a pitched roof of grey concrete tiles. The main doors are set in the centre of the façade. The wooden window frames are rotten and need replacing. The building is currently unoccupied and has a 'To Let' board at each end.

See Unit 2.11 Visual information and Unit 4.3 Designing and reporting surveys

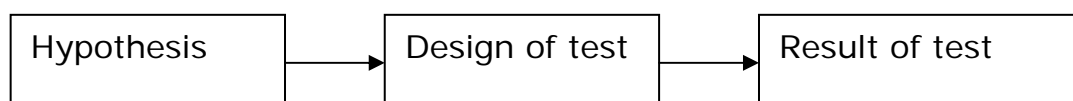
3 Practice A

Choose one of the following objects, decide what are the key elements and write a description in 50 words.

- (a) your mobile phone
- (b) the building where you live
- (c) a coin or banknote from your purse

4 Describing a process

Any process such as a research experiment or a business cycle can be seen as a flow chart:



Read the following text and identify:

- (a) Hypothesis
- (b) Design of test
- (c) Result of test

Ruth Brooks, an amateur scientist, and Dr Dave Hodgson, a biologist from Exeter University, believed that garden snails might have a 'homing' ability. So they **recently** conducted an experiment to find out if the snails could find their way home. Ruth **first** persuaded several neighbours to take part, and **then** each marked some snails in their gardens with nail varnish, each neighbour using a different colour. **After that** the snails were exchanged between the neighbours, and their locations were **subsequently** tracked. To Dr Hodgson's surprise it was found that if they were released no more than 10 metres from their home garden the snails were able to find their way back. The experiment is **now** being replicated on a national scale in order to check the findings.

Note that the language used for the description will include adverbs and conjunctions such as **recently**, **first** and **then** (in bold above).

5 Practice B

Study the flow chart below and write a description in about 100 words.

STARTING A BUSINESS

START HERE

