PRACTICE 2

It is important that the details in a descriptive paragraph support the overall impression given in the topic sentence. In each of the following plans, one detail has nothing to do with the topic sentence; it is merely a bit of irrelevant information. Find the irrelevant detail and circle its letter.

1. In the video of yesterday's dramatic win, soccer star Leo Messi looks triumphant.
   a. mouth grinning broadly
   b. arms raised high above his head
   c. first began playing soccer at age five
   d. both index fingers pointing into the air
   e. head flung back, looking at the sky

2. Magda's sewing shop is crammed with the items of her trade.
   a. racks of clothing awaiting alterations
   b. thread, thimbles, and tailor's chalk scattered on the work table
   c. dress forms for all shapes and sizes in one corner
   d. large mug half full of coffee on the window sill
   e. sewing machine in front of the window

3. The Calle Ocho Festival, named after S.W. 8th Street in Little Havana, is a giant Latino street party.
   a. as far as the eye can see on S.W. 8th Street, thousands of people stroll, eat, and dance
   b. on the left, vendors sell hot pork sandwiches, *pasteles* (spiced meat pies), and fried sweets dusted with powdered sugar
   c. up close, the press of bare-limbed people, blaring music, and rich smells
   d. during the 1980s, Dominican merengue music hit the dance clubs of New York
   e. on the right, two of many bands play mambo or merengue music

Constantinos/Shutterstock.com

4. In the photograph from 1877, Chief Joseph looks sad and dignified.
   a. long hair pulled back, touched with gray
   b. dark eyes gaze off to one side, as if seeing a bleak future
   c. strong mouth frowns at the corners
   d. ceremonial shell necklaces cover his chest
   e. Nez Percé tribe once occupied much of the Pacific Northwest

5. Many people are taking personal steps to curb global warming.
   a. hybrid cars in high demand
   b. increasing popularity of public transportation and carpools

c. recycling a priority in many households

d. use of special bulbs for energy-saving light

e. glaciers melting at fast rates

PRACTICE 3

Here are three topic sentences for descriptive paragraphs. Give five specific details that would support the overall impression given in each topic sentence. Appeal to as many of the senses as possible. Be careful not to list irrelevant bits of information.

EXAMPLE Stopped in time by the photographer, my mother appears confident.

Details:

a. *her hair swept up in a sophisticated pompadour*

b. *a determined look in her young eyes*

c. *wide, self-assured smile*

d. *her chin held high*

e. *well-padded shoulders*

(These five details support *confident* in the topic sentence.)

1. This was clearly a music (sports, or computer) lover's room.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

2. The buildings on that street look sad and run-down.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

3. The beach on a hot summer day presented a constant show.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

PRACTICE 4

Pick the description you like best from Practice 3. Prewrite for more details if you wish. Choose a logical order in which to present the best details, make a plan or an outline, and then write an excellent descriptive paragraph.

PRACTICE 5 TEAMWORK: CRITICAL VIEWING AND WRITING

Describe a Painting

In a group with four or five classmates, study the painting below. Your task is to write one paragraph describing this painting so that someone who has never seen it can visualize it. As a group, craft a good topic sentence that gives an overall impression of the scene. Your topic sentence might take this form:

"George Tooker's 1950 painting, *Subway*, shows (or captures) *the subway as a frightening place, prison-like environment*

Have one person take notes as you brainstorm important details, using rich language to capture the scene. Now decide the best order in which to present your details—right to left, center to sides, or some other. Use transitional expressions to guide the reader's eye from detail to detail. Revise the writing to make it as exact and fresh as possible. Be prepared to read your work to the full class.

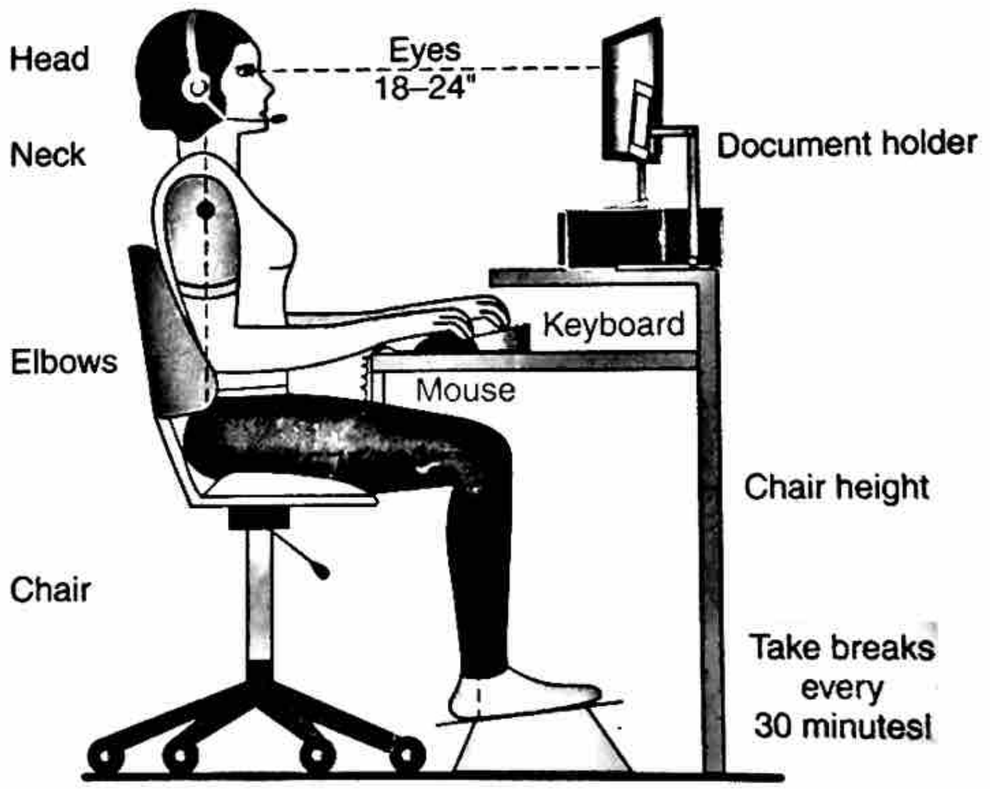
Subway by George Tooker. 1950

George Tooker, 1920-2011. The Subway, 1950. Egg Tempera on composition board, 18⅛ x 36⅛ in. (46 x 91.8 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Juliana Force Purchase Award #50.23 © Estate of George Tooker. Photo courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

PRACTICE 10 TEAMWORK: CRITICAL VIEWING AND WRITING

In a group with four or five classmates, study this diagram showing the body position recommended for desk workers and students. This position avoids eyestrain, back and neck injury, and hand or wrist injury. In your group, convert the information shown here into the outline for a memo or short essay. Your audience is office workers and students; your purpose is to *describe* healthy workstation posture.

First, jot details that describe each important part of the diagram. Select the most important points to include and arrange them according to space order in an outline. If you have time, draft a clear essay or memo. Be prepared to share your work with the class.



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