

ASSIGNMENT DISCOVERY: OBJECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

I. How to write objectively:

- Avoid statements that imply how well someone does something.
- Avoid statements that judge if someone can or can't do something.

II. How to write a narrative:

- Step-by-step or “play-by-play” of events. What happened?

III. How to write descriptively:

- Describe by appealing to the senses.
- Use strong action **verbs**
- Employ modifiers (adjectives and adverbs)
- Use specifics and add details.

I. Objective Writing: Give non-evaluative statements that do not imply what an individual can or cannot do, or to what degree.

Here is a non-example:

Damian can cook simple items with assistance. He cannot set the oven temperature independently and care should be taken to assure that he does not burn himself. He cannot read the directions on the box. Damian required one-to-supervision to mix and prepare the brownies and to put them into the oven. He cannot be trusted to cut the brownies with a knife.

This writer has many evaluative statements and has written an observation that does not indicate what the individual can do. The descriptions we write should be honest accounts of individual's activities that lead potential employers to presume competence. Remember that, initially, potential employers will only get to know the individual by what you tell them!

II. Narrative Writing: So...what happened? Document actions, communication, and give an objective (!) account of what you observed.

Here is a non-example:

Damian is a good listener. He follows suggestions and works well with his DSP. Damian is good at cooking tasks like finding ingredients and blending ingredients. With his DSP's help, Damian can set the oven thermostat and cut baked goods. Damian successfully completed every task he attempted.

A common mistake that many people lapse into globally speaking about the individual and making a judgement call. The excessive use of “to be” verbs like "is", "was", and "were" usually mean that writing is evaluative and not a rich, objective, narrative, as is necessary for the discovery process. Don't say “Damian is a good worker. Tell me WHAT he does and HOW he does it. What does “being a good worker” look like? Paint a picture with your words.

Here is an example from the same event described above, but this time, rewritten in an objective, “play-by-play” manner.

Damian **selects** the brownie mix from the pantry, **finds** a mixing bowl from the cabinet and takes out a mixing spoon from the utensil drawer, after **being reminded** by a staff person. As the staff person **reads the directions** he **opens** the box, and puts the mix into the bowl and continues to **blend** in ingredients. When he completes the mixing he **pours** the mixture in a glass pan **following a gesture** by the staff person. The staff person says, “**What’s next?**” and Damian **points** to the oven thermostat. The staff person says, “**Which button is for bake?**” and Damian **pushes** the **Bake** button. Damian then **begins to turn** the thermostat and the staff person says, “**Stop at 375.**” As Damian nears 375, the staff person says, “**That’s it.**” and he **stops at a nearby indicator**. The staff person says, “**One more click.**” and Damian **completes the setting**. The staff person asks, “**How long do we cook them?**” and Damian answers her. Damian **sets the timer** similar to the oven. When the timer goes off, Damian **puts an oven mitt on his right hand** and **opens the oven** with his left. As he reaches in the staff person says, “**Careful, everything is hot.**” Damian **holds the pan** and **slides it out** of the oven, **keeping the container level**. When the brownies had cooled, Damian **removes a serving knife** from the utility drawer and **cuts the brownies with hand-over-hand assistance** from the staff person.

III. **DESCRIPTIVE WRITING:** Describe by appealing to the senses. Use strong action verbs and write in the active voice. **SHOW--DON’T TELL!** Add adjectives and adverbs to give detail.

Damian selects the **chocolate** brownie mix from the pantry, finds a **medium-sized** mixing bowl from the cabinet and ~~takes out a~~ **removes** a mixing spoon from the utensil drawer, after being reminded by a staff person. As the staff person reads the directions he opens the box, ~~and puts~~ **pours** the mix into the bowl and continues to blend in ingredients. When he completes the mixing he pours the mixture in a glass pan following a gesture by the staff person. The staff person says, “What’s next?” and Damian **confidently** points to the oven thermostat. The staff person says, “Which button is for bake?” and Damian **immediately** pushes the Bake button. Damian then begins to turn the thermostat and the staff person says, “Stop at 375.” As Damian nears 375, the staff person says, “That’s it.” and he stops at a nearby indicator. The staff person says, “One more click.” and Damian completes the setting. The staff person asks, “How long do we cook them?” and Damian ~~answers her~~ says, “**Thirty minutes.**” Damian sets the timer similar to the oven. When the timer goes off, Damian puts an oven mitt on his **right** hand and opens the oven with his **left**. As he reaches in the staff person says, “Careful, everything is hot.” Damian ~~holds~~ **grasps** the pan and slides it out of the oven, **keeping the container level**. When the brownies had cooled, Damian removes a serving knife from the **utility** drawer and cuts the brownies **into small squares** with hand-over-hand assistance from the staff person.