

Reading Centre

making a difference

Writing to describe
in Years 7 to 10



Thinking to describe

Often school-based tests and assignments require writing that ***describes***.

This slideshow will examine how to write a description in Science.

To ***describe*** in Science means to recall facts, processes or patterns and retell them.

This will likely involve writing about actions, features, factors or ideas:

- in the order they occur in an event or process (sequential description)
- in terms of how they cause or affect each other (causal description).

An example task

Consider the following Science task:



Image: Pixabay

Describe the process of shark respiration.

Respiration is the process of a shark breathing.

Describing how a shark breathes will involve writing about each step in the process of breathing.

The writing will be a sequential description.

What language features are important?

A written sequential description will likely include:

- a **topic sentence** to introduce what the description is about
- **steps** or **processes** listed in the order in which they occur
- **pronouns** to connect ideas without repeating words, for example, 'this', 'these', 'it' and 'they'
- **conjunctions** to show in what order step or processes occur, for example, 'at the same time' and 'after'
- **synonyms** to avoid repeating words, for example, 'breathe' can be used instead of 'respire'
- **phrases** to give specific information about where, how, why and when processes happen, for example, 'in water', 'through the gills'.

Sample description

Topic sentence

There are four things necessary in shark respiration: mouth, movement, gills and gas. Sharks breathe by forcing water into their mouths and out of their gill openings. This can happen as they swim with an open mouth (ram ventilation) or by using mouth muscles to pump in water (buccal pumping). Some species can do both and others, only one. Once inside the mouth, oxygen in water is absorbed into the shark's blood via thin skin on the gills' surface. At the same time, carbon dioxide leaves the blood through the gills.

Synonyms

Pronouns

Phrases

Conjunctions