

How to describe your artwork in English

(10 writing or speaking tips for non-native English speakers)

- 1. Give us the basics.** You should always provide the title, the date, the size of the piece, and the materials used. You'll also want to include a more detailed physical description if the audience is not viewing the piece in person. This would include talking about things like the color, lines, shapes, value, texture, movement, mood, contrast, etc.
- 2. Explain your process or technique.** Tell your audience about the steps you took to create this piece, the techniques you used along the way, and the amount of time you spent on it. This will increase their appreciation of your work.
- 3. Share your message.** Explain your purpose for creating this piece and your goals for sharing it. It's also interesting if you can talk about your inspiration or give some context to your work, like how it fits with or is different from your other pieces. This can really help the audience to understand your vision and passion and to value your work. You can't expect the average person to understand and appreciate a piece by an artist they know nothing about.
- 4. Keep it simple.** It's very common for artists to get really complex with their language when explaining their work. The best descriptions are ones that anyone can understand, so try to think of a way to explain that will be clear to everyone. Think of how you would describe it to children, grandparents, or people who can't see it in person.
- 5. However, don't make it too general.** Simple doesn't mean boring. Specific details are interesting! Use this opportunity to share your story and point out little things the audience might miss to give them a look into your world.
- 6. Choose the best vocab.** Try to choose words that suggest emotion or action to draw your viewer into the experience more fully and to feel what you want them to feel. There are a lot of adjectives in English, but the subtle differences between words can really change the feeling that you convey. For example, think about the differences in feeling or mood between these words: dark, sinister, somber, black, dim, shadowy, murky, gloomy, drab, etc.
- 7. Use a good dictionary and thesaurus.** It takes time and patience to find the best words to describe your work but it is time well spent. Merriam Webster's [Learner's Dictionary](#) for ESL and [Thesaurus](#) are my recommendations. Look at artists that inspire you or that do work similar to yours and research the words they use as a starting point.
- 8. Learn to use phrasal verbs.** These are used very frequently in English and you will sound more natural if you can learn to use them correctly. [Phrasal Verb Demon](#) is a site that explains and gives examples of how to use them.
- 9. Try to use idioms, similes, and metaphors.** Do you know the difference between [idioms](#), [similes](#), & [metaphors](#)? These can be useful tools for describing your work, but are difficult for non-native speakers to master. The Grammarly blog has descriptions and examples of each one, to help you in no time flat! (an idiom for very quickly)
- 10. Check your work!** If you're writing, do a spell check, [grammar check](#), and get a native speaker or English coach to look over your work before you share it with your audience. If you're speaking, practice talking about your piece with a native speaker or coach to be sure your description is correct and easy to understand.

For more tips on using English to share your creativity with the world, visit [Artglish.com!](#)

