

Free Write Prompt for all levels

Target Skill: Written expression / descriptive writing

Activity Objective(s): Students will practice writing descriptively and personally in English by responding to a visual prompt. Students will also practice organizing their thoughts into coherent sentences and paragraphs, and will build confidence in written self-expression.

Class Level: Beginning to Intermediate

NOTE: This in-class assignment can be a precursor to a larger creative writing assignment.

Materials:

- One printed or digitally displayed "mystery photo" prompt
- Student writing journals or lined paper
- Optional: a list of descriptive vocabulary/sentence starters displayed on the board

Time: 40–35 minutes

Procedure:

1. **Unveil two photos and two paragraphs, each relating to one of the photos (10 minutes):** Have one student read one of the paragraphs out loud, and another student read the second paragraph. After both paragraphs have been read, ask the students to match the paragraphs to their corresponding photo. Ask the students what descriptive words they heard. Create a word bank together using descriptive words they heard in the example paragraphs, and words they can come up with on their own using the photos as references.

Example Paragraphs with Example Photos:



The air was cold around me. My wet hair stuck to my face and tickled my cheeks. I looked up at the clouds storming above me. Rain hit my face. I wanted to turn home and run into my parents' arms, but I was too curious not to watch the storm. I wanted to feel brave, so I watched even when I heard loud crashes.



It's my tenth birthday. When I woke up, my parents gave me gifts. I love my new blue bicycle. In the evening, my friends came over to celebrate. We ate pizza, and they sang me "Happy Birthday," as I blew out candles on my cake. I love celebrating every year.

2. **Reveal the Image (3 min):** Display a visually interesting and somewhat mysterious image to the class without any explanation. Good options include a crowded market in an unfamiliar city, a person standing at the edge of a mountain, an empty train station at night, or a child laughing at something out of frame. OR they can include images related

to a specific unit if they are interesting enough to support creative writing. A related unit example might be an emotion unit, where emotion vocabulary is introduced.

Give students 30–60 seconds to look at the image in silence before speaking.

3. **Whole Class Observation (4 min):** Ask students to share what they notice out loud, not what they think or feel yet, just what they see. Write key vocabulary on the board as students call it out. This builds a shared word bank that students can draw from during writing, which is especially supportive for beginning-level learners.
4. **Introduce the Writing Prompt (2 min):** Display the writing prompt and read it aloud. Students will respond to the following:
 - What is happening in this photo? Who are these people, and what is their story? How does this image make you feel, and why?

For beginning-level students, also display sentence starters on the board:

- "I see someone who is happy/sad/angry because..."
 - "This image makes me feel... because..."
 - "This reminds me of..."
5. **Independent Writing (12–15 min):** Students write their response independently in their journals or on paper.
 6. **Sharing (10 min):** Students can share their piece, a sentence, or one idea from their writing with the class.
 7. **Reflection (3–5 min):** Close with a brief discussion."
 - "What was the experience of writing like for you? Where did it feel easy, and where did it feel challenging?"
 - "In what ways did the image influence your writing? What did it make you notice or think about?"
 - "What, if anything, in your own writing surprised you? A word, an idea, or a direction you didn't expect to take?"
 8. **Whole class edits (10-15 min):** After reading the students' independent writing assignments, make a list of common grammar mistakes the students made. On a different day, go over these grammar or spelling mistakes as a whole class. Don't call out students or use their exact assignment as the example, but discuss the mistakes to the whole class and how to correct it.

Suggested Images:





ELS class Creative Writing Assignment Rubric

Objective

In this activity, you will show that you can:

- Write about a photo using details and feelings
- Write your ideas in full sentences
- Use your imagination and express yourself in English.
- Use new vocabulary words from our class discussion in your writing.

What Is Your Task?

You will look at a photo on the board and write about it in your notebook. Don't just describe what you see, but try to tell a story using feelings, senses (see, feel, hear, taste, smell), and imagination.

Questions To Think About

- What is happening in this photo?
- Who are these people? What is their story?
- How does this photo make you feel? Why?

Sentence Starters If You're Stuck

- "In this photo, I see..."
- "I think this person is..."
- "This photo makes me feel... because..."
- "This reminds me of..."

Materials You Will Need

- A notebook and a pen
- The photo your teacher shows on the screen
- The word bank on the board (your teacher will build this with you)

What Do You Turn In?

- Your writing in your notebook (this will be your **exit ticket**)
- At least 5 sentences written together as one paragraph.

There are 5 categories. Each one is worth 4 points. The highest score is 12 points.

Category	Great (3 points)	Good (2 points)	Getting There (1 point)	No Effort (0 points)
Imagination and Creativity	You created a story or shared strong feelings. Your ideas are original and interesting.	You shared some of your own ideas or feelings beyond what you saw in the photo.	Your writing lists what you see.	No effort to write.
Descriptive Words	You used strong, specific words that help the reader picture the scene. You used words from our class word bank.	You used some good describing words and at least 1-2 words from the board.	You used simple words. You did not use words from the board, or they felt out of place.	You did not use words from the word bank.
Organization	Your writing is one clear paragraph. Your sentences are in a logical order and connect well.	Your writing looks like a paragraph, but some sentences feel out of order or disconnected.	You wrote some sentences, but they feel like a list and are not in a paragraph.	You don't have sentences.

Sentences and Grammar	Your sentences are complete and mostly correct.	Most sentences are complete. You have a few grammar mistakes, but the meaning is still clear.	Your sentences are incomplete and hard to understand.	You have no full sentences or more than a few words.
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Your score: _____ / 12