

Unit-1

Describing Objects/People/Places

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Content
 - 1.2.1 Sub-Content I (Describing Objects)
(Self-check Exercises I)
 - 1.2.2 Sub-Content II (Describing Persons)
(Self-check Exercises II)
 - 1.2.3 Sub-Content III (Describing Places)
(Self-Check Exercises III)
- 1.3 Key to Self-check exercises
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 Exercises
- 1.6 Field Work
- 1.7 Further Reading

1.0 Objectives:

After studying and working with this unit, you will be able to:

- describe, using English, familiar objects of day-to-day use
- describe in English persons writing about their physical features, age, dress, what they do, etc.
- describe places such as markets, temples, their location, historical, religious, artistic significance, etc.

- use descriptive phrases, structures of sentences in English
- use tenses and verb phrases appropriate for describing.

1.1 Introduction:

It is necessary for students to learn how to use English for describing places, people and objects, etc. They have to equip themselves with the knowledge and use of English structures and vocabulary to be able to meet the requirement of the job-market, after their graduation. They may take up a job of a salesman, tourist guide, or they may even like to take up journalism as their career. Whatever field they choose, they will need English for their efficient functioning in that field. This unit and the following ones also have been written with this objective in mind.

1.2 Content

1.2.1 Sub-Content I: Describing Objects:

I Describing Objects:

When you wish to describe anything, you must have an eye for the detail. You must be a good observer. Suppose you were going for a walk. There was a middle-aged man struggling up the road on his bicycle. Suddenly, a car came at a great speed, its horn screaming, and its fender struck the cyclist. The bike and the man fell down. The car did not stop. There was an enquiry. The police inspector asked you:

The Inspector : Can you identify the car?

You : It was a big car. I think it was a Tata Sumo.

The Inspector : Are you sure? What was its colour?

You : Yes. It was a Sumo. And it was olive green.

The Inspector : Can you remember the number of the car?

You : No, I am sorry. It happened so quickly. I was looking at the cyclist who fell down.

The Inspector : Couldn't you at least see if the car was from this state or from outside?

You : Well, the first letters were definitely MH 12 or something.
Quite certainly MH.

The Inspector : Well, thank you.

You can see how details are very important. The inspector can now concentrate on a Sumo car or cars registered in Maharashtra. The search can, thus, be restricted to those cars only.

Note the pattern of descriptive sentences:

It was -----

The car was -----

The first letters were -----

Some people have a habit of noticing details and they remember them. There are a number of things in our house, in the hall, in the kitchen, in the bedroom, etc. But, if you are asked to describe the things in the kitchen or the hall or your own room, will you be able to describe them? Here is the picture of a kitchen. There are a number of things and gadgets in the kitchen.

[The Picture of a Kitchen]



This is a kitchen platform. Above it, there is a small cupboard in which there are kettle and pans. On the platform, there is a gas-stove as well as a microwave unit. Near the microwave, there is a sink with water-taps. Below the kitchen platform, there are a number of cupboards to keep big and small dishes, pots, etc.

2

There is also a waste-bin at the right hand side of the platform.

Note the structure again: This is ----, There is ----, There are ----. Note also a number of prepositional phrases used here to state the place or location of things:

above the platform, on the platform, near the microwave,
below the kitchen platform, etc.

In every kitchen, there is an oven for baking things. Read the description of an oven given here:

OVEN:

Oven is a device for baking, grilling, heating, etc. It is an electric device. It has a see-through glass door to view the food being cooked. There are stainless steel black heating elements at the top and the bottom of the oven. They are controlled by a thermostat to provide uniform temperature inside the oven. We can see these through the glass door. There is a wire grill inside the oven. The glass door is a drop-down front door, which gives you easy access to the interior of the oven. On the top right hand side, there is a black knob for temperature control. Below that there is a heater selection knob. There are heater indication lights also. It is a very useful device in the kitchen. We can use it for toasting bread. It can grill the sandwiches for us. It can also be used to fry groundnuts, etc.

Note how the oven is described here. We started with:

1. what kind of a device it is.
2. then we described its parts such as see-through glass door, etc.
3. then we noted how useful it is.

We made use of the structures like : The oven is / has, It is / has, There is / are. They are controlled (by) ----, etc. In the description of an object, we use simple

present tense. If we are talking about the things in the past, we can use simple past tense. But in any case we describe the appearance, the parts, function and usefulness of the object we are describing.

Here is a task for you to try your hand at describing things:

TASK 1:

(The Picture of a Fridge)



- 1) Describe the fridge in the picture given above.
- 2) Describe your Cell-Phone.

1.2.2 Sub-Content II

II Describing Persons:

Read the following very short descriptions of persons and the descriptive phrases, adjectives, etc.

1. Geeta Kulkarni is twenty two years old. She is very short and has long curly hair. The best feature in her face is a set of lovely dimples when she smiles, which she often does.
2. Mahendra is twenty five years old. He is a thin man. He has wheatish complexion and a small moustache.
3. Ratna is a fifteen year old girl. She is dark skinned, and has a broad face and very long hair always in a plait.

It is very important to observe people and be able to describe them. A woman was going for a walk in the evening, and someone came running from behind, snatched her chain from her neck and ran away. These incidents are now frequently being reported. The police will ask questions to the woman :

: Can you describe the person?

: He was a young man, Sir. He was of a medium height. I saw only the side of his face. He was rather dark-skinned. He had short black hair. He had put on a half-sleeved shirt of grey colour and faint blue trousers. He slipped while running and I saw yellow rubber slippers on his feet.

This lady has been able to give comparatively better description, because normally, in such a situation, a woman is so frightened that she may not be able to give any details of the chain-snatcher. But it is not only chain-snatcher that you are going to describe. You may have to describe people, young or old, who you come across in your life. What do you notice first when you meet strangers, or even persons familiar to you? Here is Khushwant Singh, a very well known writer, describing his very old grandmother.

Note the descriptive details, adjectives and other expressions used by the writer.

My grandmother, like everybody's grandmother, was an old woman. She had been old and wrinkled for the twenty years that I had known her. People said that she had once been young and pretty and had even had a husband, but that was hard to believe.

She had always been short and fat and slightly bent. Her face was a criss-cross of wrinkles running from everywhere to everywhere. No, we were certain that she

had always been as we had known her. Old, so terribly old that she could not have grown older, and had stayed at the same age for twenty years. She could never have been pretty; but she was always beautiful. She hobbled about the house in spotless white with one hand resting on her waist to balance her and the other telling the beads of her rosary. Her silver hair was scattered untidily over her pale puckered face, and her lips constantly moved in prayer.

(Khushwant Singh)

You must have come across old men and women. Note how the writer has given here the details of appearance of his grandmother. Study the following descriptive details:

- age : old, terribly old
- face: : wrinkled, puckered
- general appearance : not pretty, but beautiful
- figure : short and fat and slightly bent
- manner of walking : hobbled, with one hand resting on her waist
- hair : silver, scattered untidily
- dress : spotless white
- action : lips moved in prayer, hand telling rosary beads.

The passage is written in the past tense. Most of the verb phrases are in the past tense or in the past perfect tense, because the writer is talking about his grandmother who is no more. But you can see what details of personality can be given while describing a person.

You can write about age, height, weight, face, head and hair, etc. in general terms. See for example:

- Age** : You may not know the age in years. But you can say:
- An infant, a child, a teen-ager, a young man/woman, a middle-aged Man /woman, an old man, an old lady, etc.

Height : Normally we talk of height in feet. We can only guess someone's height. We can say: He must be five feet six inches tall. She is about five feet three inches.

But very often we say:

He is rather tall. She is rather short. She may come up to my shoulders.

He is of a medium height. He is very tall for an Indian. She cannot be more than five feet.

Weight : If we know, we can say how much a person weighs. But while describing, we talk about weight in general terms. We make use of adjectives such as:

fat, thin, slim, overweight, plump, famished, well-built, stocky,

These are all adjectives. Fat, overweight and famished and thin have unfavourable meaning. We mean to criticize the person we are describing. But, plump and slim are favourable in their meaning. For example, 'She is slim and looks pretty.' 'Well-built' is favourable in meaning, but stocky is not.

Face and Head: When you describe someone's face you say something about his or her eyes. Eyes can be:

blue, black, brown, grey or green.

Eyes can also be round or elongated or slit eyes. Face and head include Hair, Nose, Moustache, Lips and Ears.

Hair : Hair can be black, blond, in colour. In size the hair can be long or short, curly, wavy, straight, closely cropped, tied in a bun, or left loose round the shoulders.

Moustache: This is in the case of men. There can be a thin moustache or ample moustache, curved or sloping down. Or a man can be just clean-shaven.

Lips : lips can be thin, red, or wide, and thick

While describing a person you can use the following expressions (mostly adjectives), which can be your general impression about the person you are describing.

smart, efficient, mischievous (about children), elegant, thoughtful, melancholy, gentle, untidy, easy-going, eccentric, good-humoured, businesslike, etc.

Then you can describe the clothes a person puts on:

A young man puts on trousers or jeans and a shirt that has long or short sleeves. A girl puts on a saree and a blouse or jeans and shirt, or a skirt and a blouse, or a kurta and pyjama.

While describing a familiar person, you can write about what he or she does for living. A woman may be a teacher, an officer in a government department, or in a bank, etc. A man can also be a teacher, an officer, or a businessman running a cloth-shop, a garage, a shop of electric goods, etc. You can also write about their financial status, e.g. a poor family, a middle-class family, quite well-to-do or a very rich family.

Now here are two small passages describing persons. Study the descriptive details about the physical features, profession, financial status, etc.

Zakir Khan:

Zakir Khan is twenty four years old. He is over six feet tall and has a muscular physique. He has light brown eyes and straight black hair which is perpetually flopped on his forehead. Zakir Khan is an actor by profession. In fact he is one of the superstars of the silver screen. He lives in a plush five bedroom penthouse in suburban Mumbai along with his three servants. He belongs to Haryana, where his parents and siblings still live. They come and stay with him sometime. Though Zakir Khan is very fond of eating, he makes sure he eats the right food and in reasonable quantities since he wants to maintain his weight. He has a gym in his Penthouse where he works out with his personal trainer for two hours everyday. The rest of the day is spent in shootings which sometimes wind up quite late at night. After that he often goes out with friends to restaurants till the wee hours of the morning. He has four cars including an open sports car and huge collection of dark glasses and designer watches. Zakir Khan is vain about his looks and arrogant about his superstar status. He is very confident about his acting abilities and thinks it will be a matter of time before he is offered a Hollywood film.

Now note the details of Zakir Khan's personality:

Personal details his age, height, physique, colour of eyes, hair

His profession	actor of superstar status
His residence	a plush five- bed- room Penthouse
His family	parents and sibling in Haryana
His eating habits	right kind of food with reasonable quantities
His daily routine	physical exercise for two hours, then shooting for films, spending time with friends at restaurants till late at night.
His personal collections:	four cars, collection of glasses and designer watches
His nature	arrogant and ambitious.

You can get such descriptive details of film stars, sports persons, etc. from magazines and newspapers. Try to write short descriptive passages about some of them.

Here is another small passage of an ordinary but a very responsible young man:

Twenty year old Sanjay Chavan is a milkman by profession. He works at a small milk booth in a colony in South Mumbai. He is a very pleasant looking young man of medium height and regular features. His bright smile reveals his amicable and sunny disposition. Sanjay lives with his mother and three younger siblings in a small room. He is a very responsible and hardworking young man as he realizes that his family is dependent on him. Sanjay does not really enjoy his work of delivering milk and collecting money. He had to leave school after his 9th class when his father passed away. He has taken a small loan and joined a computer class in the evenings. Sanjay hopes that he will get a good job once he completes his computer course.

Note the details about Sanjay:

His age, his profession, his personality, his residence
his family and his responsibility, his modest ambition,
his aim of life.

Note that the descriptive passages here are all written using simple present tense.

Task II

- 1) Make a list of the verb phrases from the passage on Zahir Khan. Use these verb phrases in your own sentences to describe a person familiar to you.

- 2) Write short descriptive passage about:
a) your favourite teacher, b) a bus conductor

1.2.3 Sub-Content III:

III) Describing Places:

When writing description of places, you need to write about :

- 1) where it is (its location), what it is --- a castle, a museum, an art gallery, a temple, a palace, etc
- 2) if it is a historical place, its possible period, when it was built,
- 3) its structure and its present state,
- 4) if it is a town, a hill station, then where it is situated, what it is known for, etc.

Read this description of Matheran, a hill station in Maharashtra:

Matheran:

Matheran is a hill station in the district of Raigad. It is situated at the height of 800 meters in the hill ranges of Sahyadri mountain. This beautiful place was discovered in 1850 by the Governor of Bombay (now Mumbai), Lord Elphinston. This is a very peaceful and pleasant hill station, where cars are not allowed. It is a heaven for those who love nature. You see hills covered with green grass. There is a meter-gauge train running from the railway station Neral, which slowly winds up its way to Matheran. It's a wonderful experience to travel by this train.

Note the structures in this descriptive passage. The sentences are all in the present tense. And you come across structures like:

There is -----, there are-----, this is-----, it is -----

You see -----, you come across, and so on.

And there are descriptive noun phrases such as :

the hill ranges of the Sahyadri Mountain, very peaceful and pleasant hill station, a heaven for those who love nature, a meter-gauge train, etc.

Here is another small passage describing a protected forest area:

Nagzira:

Nagzira is a well known protected jungle area in the district of Gondia in Maharashtra. There is a big lake near the rest house bungalow. On the full moon night, you can watch the moon reflected in the calm water of the lake. There is a hill called Nagdeo near the lake. In this forest you come across a great variety of trees like teak, dhavda, etc. Besides, there are thick clusters of Bamboo. The forest is full of a variety of animals such as wild pigs, leopards, tigers, deer, etc. Evenings here are very pleasant.

You can see that in describing a place, we mostly find the structures like:

There is -----, there are, it is-----, this is-----

as we have noted in the earlier passage. You also come across expressions like,

you see, you come across, etc.

Note also the descriptive noun phrases such as:

The hill called Nagdeo, a great variety of trees, a variety of animals, etc.

The noun phrases in such descriptive passages are longish with adjectives, and prepositional phrases (describing location), and even clauses. You may write about the climate, some typical geographical feature, crops, etc. See for example, the following short descriptive pieces:

Jaipur: Jaipur has extreme climate with hot and humid summers particularly from April to July. The temperature reaches 45°C. And during the winter months, the days are fairly sunny and pleasant, and the nights are quite cold as the temperature goes below zero.

Bhopal: Bhopal has long slopes of sandstone, which is a part of the Malwa Plateau. The summers from April to June are quite hot. The winters from November to February are cool and pleasant.

Bangalore: Bangalore has moderate and pleasant climate. The summers from April to June have an average temperature of 23° C and the winters from October to February are cool and comfortable.

Note the expressions describing specially the climate in the summer and the winter. Note also the adjectival phrases used to describe the climate.

Task 3:

- 1) Describe, giving necessary details, the following locations visited by you:

A temple in your township

A vegetable market in your township

1.3 Key to Self-Check Exercises:**I Self-Check I: Answers:**

- 1) Description of a Fridge:

A fridge is a very useful device in the kitchen of every house. It is very useful to store fruits, vegetables, pickles and jams, milk, etc. We can use it to keep some special medicines in it. There are four compartments inside the fridge, and a shelf inside its door. The uppermost compartment is the freezer in which we can keep a tray for ice-cubes, and in the space by its side, we can keep ice-cream cups, etc. In the two slots below we can store eatables, fruits, jam bottles, pickles, etc. The last one is a bigger well, in which we can keep vegetables. We can use fridge for making ice-cream at home, putting the ice-cream maker in the freezer.

- 2) A Cell-Phone:

My cell-phone is the latest Nokia model, which is not only a phone, but also a device for storing all essential information, a telephone directory, financial transactions, addresses, etc. I can use it for sending and receiving messages. My cell phone provides immense entertainment to me. I have stored in it all my favourite songs. It has a powerful camera in it, and a device to attach it to my computer. I use my cell-phone to keep record of my financial transactions, bank-account numbers, and all essential information, such as my C.V., postal addresses, etc. My cell-phone is constantly with me, wherever I go. There is a device in it to remind me of my appointments, train timings, etc.

Key to Self-check Exercises II

- 1) Verb Phrases from the passage on Zahir Khan and their use in sentences:

a) My friend is a singer. He has his own piano. He stays in a hostel.

- b) I have another friend who lives in our own housing society. We eat our lunch together at the college canteen. We make it sure to catch the same bus.
 - c) If you want to be a sportsperson, you must maintain your health. You ought to work out in a gym every day, and spend time practising your favourite sport.
 - d) I wind up my work at 6 p.m. and go out for a walk. I think a long walk to the hill-side in the evening freshens up my mind.
- 2) My Favourite Teacher: Damle Guruji was my favourite teacher at school. He used to teach us English. He could make learning grammar also a very enjoyable class. He used to tell us interesting jokes while teaching. He was sympathetic and quite helpful when we made any mistakes. Damle Guruji was always dressed in a simple manner. He must be about thirty years old. He was slim, and about five feet and seven inches tall. He had fair complexion, and he sported a thin moustache. He used to smile quite a lot while teaching. I hardly remember him to be angry. He made us speak English, read aloud in the class and we were never afraid of answering questions in his class. Damle Guruji used to play harmonium very well. In our annual gathering, he used to play and sing also. He was really a wonderful person.
- 3) The Bus Conductor I would never forget. : Our college is about two kilometers away from our city. We have to go to college by a city bus. At 8 o'clock every morning, the buses are mostly crowded. The conductor of our bus was almost always one Mr. Lokhande, and he was the most popular among all the students traveling by the bus. He looked like Raj Kapoor. He had very fair complexion, and he used to be always smiling. He never lost his temper with the passengers. He was very polite with the senior citizens and used to help them.

Key to Self-Check Exercise III:

1) A Temple: Ours is a small village on the bank of the river Krishna. The river Krishna and the temple outside the village, on the bank of the river are our most attractive places. The temple is very old one. It is said that it was built about five hundred years ago. It is a stone temple and it has beautiful natural surrounding. It is the temple of Lord Shiva. There are massive stone pillars as we enter the temple. The floor is also of black stone and very cool. There are massive stone windows, which

allow the rays of the sun to light the hall of the temple. There are steps to get down to the Shiva Lingam in the sanctorum. Inside, it is rather dark, but there is an oil lamp burning in it. There is a priest, who lives nearby, and looks after the temple. Every Monday, people of the village gather at the temple, performing Puja. On the day of Mahashivaratri, there is a huge gathering at the temple. People of the village, old and young, come to the temple every morning and evening. It is a favourite place for all.

2) A Vegetable Market: A vegetable market in our city is a very crowded place in the morning as well as in the evening, every day.. It is at the centre of the city, and it is the one place that is properly planned by the civic authorities. There are two main sections of the market, one for the fruit vendors and the other for the vegetable vendors. There is also a small section enclosed by walls, where there is mutton and fish market. There are stone platforms, for the vendors, and each vendor's place is properly demarked.. Since the neighbouring villages bring fresh vegetables to this market, it is a very popular place for the house-wives. There are fruit stalls in the other part. The fruits in this market are mostly ordered wholesale from the city vendors from Pune and Mumbai. :

1.4 Summary

This passage presents short pieces of description of objects, people and places, showing structures useful for writing descriptions of familiar things, people and places. The unit introduces structures and vocabulary useful for writing descriptions of things familiar to the students. The unit is interspersed with tasks for the students to practice writing. Model answers of these tasks are provided for them to check their own answers and make corrections where necessary.

1.5 Exercises

I Describe the following objects:

- a) The Computer Screen and the icons on it and their functions.
- b) The Pressure Cooker
- c) An Electric Iron.

II Write short descriptive passage about:

- a) a sports person you like
- b) a film personality,

c) Your uncle or the neighbour.

III Describe giving necessary details, the following locations visited by you:

a) a shopping mall, or a Gym or a Recreation Centre in your town.

b) a hill station (like Mahabaleshwar)

c) a protected forest area visited by you

1.6 Field work

From the English newspapers such as the Times of India, Indian Express, etc. collect the advertisements describing gadgets such as electronic goods, kitchen wares, etc. and study the way their parts and functions are described.

Similarly, note the passages of description of places from the travel literature from the tourist companies.

