

A window on the world

Find a window in your house, your place of work or somewhere interesting: a café with a good view of the outside world is ideal, especially if you are writing during your lunch break! Pick somewhere you can return to regularly at the same time of day. You'll need a chair and somewhere comfortable to write next to the window.

First of all, don't write: simply observe. Take in as much of the view as possible. Look at the colours, the movements, the stillness, any people, manmade objects, plants or animals. Look at the sky. What is the weather like? Look at the small details. Get down to the tiniest thing that you can comfortably experience from where you are, a single blade of grass, for instance. The window provides a frame for the observation, as if you're experiencing a vibrant three-dimensional picture.

Return to the window at the same time of day. You'll need your notebook and a pen. Write down the small details you observe. It isn't necessary to write in sentences. Write a list. Write your sense impressions. Write down the intricacies. Write down anything that occurs to you, but keep returning to the picture created by the window.

Return to the window several times at the same time of day. Of course, if you do this over a long period, you'll notice big changes: the change in the weather, the turn of the year, the changes in the way people dress. There will still be changes over the course of a week, but they will be subtle.

Repeat the writing exercise, observing and writing down your impressions. Don't try to compare to previous experiences while you're doing it: just write. Again, no need to write sentences. A list of impressions is fine.

Return to the window at different times of day. Repeat the writing exercise, observing and writing down your impressions.

Choose any one of these descriptions to turn into a longer piece of writing.

You might want to try this exercise working in a group (perhaps you already belong to a writer's group?); or you might like to share the experience with friends and ask them to do this activity too **from a different vantage point**. After an agreed period of time, meet together and read out your work or email your work to one another. When you read other people's work, look for simplicity and directness. Underline – or point out – any words that you think could be made simpler.

If you can't work in a group, leave a reasonable period of time before coming back to your piece of writing from life. Looking at your own work, underline any words that you think could be made simpler.

Commentary

Write 100 words describing any **challenges** that came up during the writing process.

Thinking about next steps? Save any work you do here in case it is useful to you when the course begins – your tutor, for instance, might invite you to discuss your experience of the taster activity.