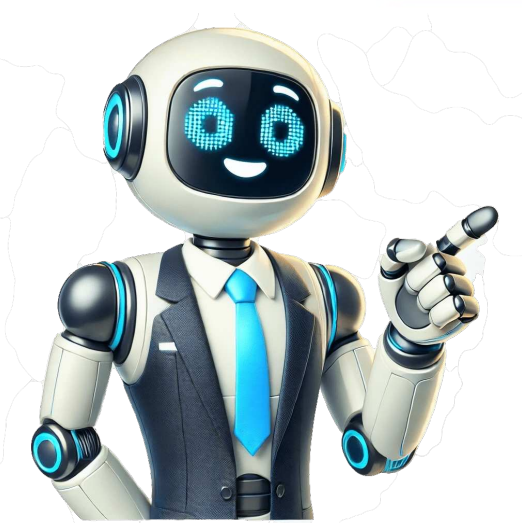


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or movement with phrases like "He stands straight and moves confidently," or "She moves with an elegant, fluid grace." These phrases illustrate their physical demeanor.What are you able to conclude a description of a person?Conclude with phrases like, "Overall, he is a very charismatic individual," or "In summary, she is known for her kindness and elegance." These provide a neat ending to the description. How to describe a picture in English?You could be asked to talk about a picture in the IELTS test. Or in any other test.You may also need to talk about a picture as part of a presentation or in conversation.It's a useful skill to have in English. It helps you to describe things you can see very clearly to others.So, let's take a look at how to do it.Introducing The Main PictureWhen talking about the picture or photograph, the first thing you want to say is a general description of it.You do not need to go into detail immediately, just introduce what the picture is of — or who it is of — and say one or two sentences about it.So, if you were talking about the picture above, you might say:This is a picture of a man. He is jumping in the air and it looks like he is on a beach somewhere.That is a perfect introduction to the picture. Even if we cannot see the picture, we have a very clear idea of what the picture is in our mind.You could also say:This picture shows a man in a pair of shorts. He is on the beach and he is jumping up very high.If you are introducing a photograph that you took yourself, then you can say this:I took this picture when I was on vacation with my friend in Greece. He was feeling very happy that day, laughing and jumping around on the beach. So I took a picture of him just as he jumped in the air.You don't need to think of details or make it too complex.Just give a brief introduction of what the picture is, who the person is, what they are doing and where they are.That is all you need to say at this stage.The Main SubjectNow you can talk about the main subject of the picture in detail.The main subject of the picture could be a person or an object. It could be an animal too.Usually, a picture has a subject. That is the next thing you talk about.If the Subject is a Person or PeopleIf the subject is a person or people, you need to describe them.Talk about:what the people are doingwhat they look likethe appearance on their facethe clothes they are wearingIf you know the person in the picture — or you took the photograph — you need to add more information who the person iswhen the picture was takenwhere you were doingSo, if we use the first picture as an example we could say the following:He is a young black man. He is jumping up high. He looks very happy because he is smiling and has a cheerful expression on his face.He is just wearing a pair of shorts and it looks like he is on a beach somewhere.Now if you took the picture, you could say this:This is a picture of my friend Alex. We were on holiday in Greece last summer and we went to the beach. We were walking on the beach and Alex started jumping around on the sand.As he jumped into the air, I took a picture of him.But It Could Be A Picture Of An ObjectIf it's an object you need to think about the following things:what object can you see?can you name the object?can you describe the object?what about the surroundings of the object?Take a look at the picture above of the house below.How to talk about this?We could say:This is a picture of a red house. It looks like it is in the middle of a field, probably the countryside. The house is red and the windows are painted white. The house looks kind of small and it also looks empty. I don't think anyone lives in this house.In this description, I mention the red house — so we know what it is and what colour it is.I mention the surroundings — a field and maybe the countryside.Then I give more description of the house — the colour, the windows and the size.I also say that I think the house is empty. It doesn't matter if the house is empty or not — this is just my opinion.But if I took the picture, I could add more detail.I could say:where I took the picturewhen I took the picturewhy I took the pictureIn short, add a little story to the description.It could sound something like this:I was walking near my parents' house. They live in a small town and as I walked across these fields, I saw this house in the middle of nowhere.It was in the summer, and I just looked at this strange house and had a strong desire to take a picture of it.But What If The Picture Is Of An Animal?If the picture is of an animal, you can use similar ways you use to describe a person.what the animal is doingwhat it looks likethe appearance on the animal's faceNow take a look at the picture of the dog below.We could talk about it like this:This is a picture of a dog. I don't know what kind of dog it is, but it has very short hair and has a light brown colour.It looks like someone has caught the attention of the dog and it's raising its paw at the person. Its ears are raised too, like the dog is excited or listening to something.In this description, I say what the animal is — a dog.Then a give a brief description of the dog — its hair and colour.Then I talk about what the dog is doing and why. I also mention the dog's ears.If you took the picture yourself, you need to add some elements of story what relationship do you have with the animal? (People often take pictures of their own pets)where you were at the time of the picturewhen you took itIt might look something like this:This is my dog, Bingo. Me and my brother were playing with him in my backyard a few weeks ago and I took this picture just as he raised his paw. My brother was about to throw a ball for Bingo.Now we have more of a story attached to the picture of the dog.We know the dog's name and we know he is male.Plus, we have some more detail of where it happened and who was there.Talking About The BackgroundOnce you have described the main subject — the person, the object or the animal — then you have to describe the background.You can give a general description of the background — just as you do with the main subject of the picture — then you can go into detail.So if we look at the man jumping on the beach again, what can we see in the background?You can describe the background generally like this:In the background, there is a beach and a large part of the picture is the blue sky. There are some clouds in the sky. And if we look at the beach, we can see some people in the far distance.That is all you need to say. You mention the main things you can see in the background:the beachthe skysome cloudspeople on the beachNo need to talk about anything else at this stage.Let's look at the picture of the red house again.Now this picture is a little different. Because we need to talk about the background and the foreground.The foreground is the part of the picture that is at the front.In this picture of the house, we need to talk about that too.So we could say:In the background, it is mostly sky. The sky looks overcast and grey. And the house is standing on a field. We can see green fields all around the house and in the foreground too.And at the very front of the picture — out of focus — there are some flowers.And finally, let's look at the picture of the dog. There is not much to see, but we still have to describe what is there.We could say:In the background, it looks like a wooden fence and a gate behind the dog. And the dog is sitting on a section of concrete. Maybe it is a backyard of someone's house. There are some cracks in parts of the concrete.That is all we need to say for each of the three pictures. When you first start to describe the background, just give a brief introduction to what you can see. It is enough. The next thing we can do is talk about it in detail.How To Talk About The DetailsOnce you give your introduction to the background, you can talk about it in more detail.Let's look at the man on the beach again.To talk about the sky might be a little difficult. But we can say what we think or feel about it.And we can add some more detail when talking about the people on the beach. And if we look clearly, we can see the sea and maybe two or three boats on the sea. So we could say this:The sky is very blue, and there are very few clouds. I think this picture must have been taken in the summer. It just looks hot to me.And there are quite a few people in the background. I can see one man lying down on the sand — maybe he is sunbathing.The other people are wearing beach clothes — shorts and t-shirts. And in the far distance, I can see the sea. And on the sea, there are two or three boats, it is not very clear. One boat looks like it has a very high sail.If you cannot see something very clearly in the picture, don't worry. It doesn't matter if you say two or three boats, for example. No one is going to correct you on this, just say what you can see.What about the picture of the red house?Again, just try to describe what you can see.You might say something like this:The house looks like it is built on a ridge on one of the fields. The ground rises up slightly in front of the house. And in the background, it looks like the land is rising down again in the opposite direction.There is nothing on the grass. Only grass. No flowers or anything else there.But there are flowers in the foreground. They are white. I don't know what kind of flowers they are, as they are out of focus.And between the grass and the flowers, it looks like a path. The ground is grey, and it goes from one side of the picture to the other.Notice in this section, I said what is not on the grass — nothing, only grass, no flowers or anything else.It is perfectly acceptable to say what is not in the background, but you cannot just say there is nothing here, nothing there, nothing over there. The way I say there is nothing is that I focus on one subject of the picture — the grass — and then say what I cannot see on it. Because often we do see things on grass — flowers, birds and the occasional cow.So that covers how to talk about the main subject and the background. But all three of these pictures are quite simple — just one main object and a plain and simple background with not much going on.What if the picture was more complex?How To Describe A Picture with More Complex DetailsHow to describe a picture that has more content and more details?Take a look at the picture below.Notice all the different things in it?Think about these questions before you begin to talk about the picture, what is this a picture of?how could you describe this picture in two or three sentences?what is the main subject of the picture?what is in the background?what is in the foreground?Let's try to answer all of these questions now.What Is This A Picture Of?This is a picture of a woman in a kitchen. The kitchen is white and very modern and has a lot of space. The woman is making something on the stove.So that's a basic description of what we can see in the picture. This is an ideal introduction, and it tells us everything we need to know for the beginning.What Is The Main Subject Of The Picture?There is a woman in the centre of the picture. She is standing behind a stove and she is stirring something in a pot on top of the stove. She seems happy as she is smiling. And she is wearing a thick grey cardigan.That tells us a great deal about the main subject. It's very clear and simple.What Is In The Background?Now this is where it gets a little complicated...Unlike the previous pictures which have a very simple background, this picture has more things in it — plus they are in different parts of the picture.This is where we use phrases like:to the leftto the rightat the bottomat the topin the top right cornerLet's look at an example of how to describe the background.In the background of the picture, we can see the kitchen. Directly behind the woman is a counter — and on the counter is a sink.There are also some books on the counter. To the far left of the picture, we can see a few books stacked together. There is a small orange-coloured object holding the books in place.And at the other end of the counter, there are a few more books leaning against a cabinet.Above the counter are some cupboards. They all have white doors. It looks like there are five of them in total. There are some more cupboards below the counter:The sink looks like it is made of stainless steel. We can see the tap above the sink.In the background, to the right, there is a cabinet. In the cabinet is an oven and what looks like a microwave oven, too. They both look like very modern designs and they are both silver.That gives a very clear description of what we can see in the background of the picture.Notice that the description is all in order of location. It doesn't jump from one part of the background to another:So it talks in order of the counterwhat is on the counterthe left of the counterthe right of the counterabove the counterbelow the counterthe sinkthe right of the background and what we can see thereThis is the best way to describe details in a picture. Do not jump from one part of the picture to another as it sounds confusing to the listener.What Is In The Foreground?And then you describe the foreground. It doesn't matter if you describe the background or the foreground first. But make sure you stick to one part and describe all of that before moving to the next part.You can use the same phrases as you used to talk about the background.Let's take a look at an example:In the foreground, there is a shelf. It is white and I think it is made of marble.There are a few objects on the shelf.To the far left, there is a bowl of lemons. The bowl is white and there are many lemons in it — maybe more than ten. Behind the bowl of lemons, and to the left, is an orange-coloured pepper mill.And then to the far right of the shelf, there are some green vegetables. The vegetables look very leafy.Just to the left of the vegetables, and closer to the middle of the shelf, are three ceramic pots. They are all white and have light-brown lids.Now there may be some vocabulary that you don't know in the above description — words such as:marblepeppermillleafyceramiclidsBut you should get a clear idea of how to use phrases such as:far leftbehindto the leftfar rightmiddleThese are the kind of words and phrases that can help you explain where things are in the picture.And if you follow the steps like that, you should be able to describe any picture at all!But what if you don't know the name of the objects you are describing?How To Describe Things You Don't Know The Name OfIf you see something in the picture and you know what it is in your own language, but you don't know how to say it in English — don't worry!You can talk around it. This gives you the opportunity to talk more and use more English. This is perfect if you are doing the IELTS speaking test!Let's take the picture of the kitchen and apply this technique. In the last part, we talked about the foreground. Let's try again — but this time we will talk around the objects we don't know the name of.In the foreground, there is a shelf. It is white. I don't know the name of the material the shelf is made from, but it is a kind of stone. People often use it in their home as it looks beautiful.To the far left of the picture, there is a bowl. Inside the bowl is a lot of fruit. I can't remember the name of this fruit, but it is yellow and has a very bitter taste. People often use it for cooking and you can make tea with it as well. Inside the bowl are ten of these fruits.And behind the bowl is another thing I don't know the name of. You can often find this in a kitchen. People use it to make pepper into very small pieces. You turn the top and the pepper comes out the bottom in tiny little pieces.Do you get the idea?By describing things this way, you will find that you can actually talk for much longer.And the examiner may give you extra marks for doing this too!Talk About Your Impressions And Thoughts Of The PictureA good thing to do when describing any picture is to give your thoughts on the picture.There is no right or wrong answer when doing this, as you are just expressing your personal opinions. But it is a valuable thing to do, especially if you are in the IELTS speaking test.Let's go through all the pictures and look at some examples.The Beach PictureI really like this picture. I like the way the man is jumping in the air and I like the big smile on his face. It just looks like a really happy and positive photograph.And it looks like really nice weather in the picture too. It looks like it must be a hot day and the sun shining brightly.No wonder the man is smiling!The Red House PictureThis place looks very bleak to me. Even on a nice summer day, it seems like it would be desolate and not an inviting place.And the red house is empty, which makes the place seem even more bleak.In the daytime, this place may be okay, but I don't think I would like to be there at night. I imagine the house would be pretty scary at night.The Dog PictureThe dog in the picture looks so nice. His fur looks really silky. I bet he's a really friendly dog. I just have a good feeling about him.The Kitchen PictureThis picture doesn't look like a real photograph at all. It looks like advertising. No one has a kitchen like that in real life. And the woman is wearing a thick cardigan in the kitchen. Do people wear clothes like that if they are cooking? It doesn't seem right.And the rest of the kitchen is so neat and tidy. My kitchen is not like that. I don't know any kitchen that looks like that!Remember — you don't have to say what you think the examiner wants to hear. You can just be honest and say what comes into your mind.Notice in the dog picture description, the speaker is saying things about the dog — how they imagine the dog to be in real life.Of course, they don't know the dog, so how could they know?But it doesn't matter. You can just give your opinion of what you think the dog is like in your imagination.Describe The Picture By Telling A StoryIf you are showing someone a picture or making a presentation using a photograph that you took yourself, then you can tell a story about it.People love to hear stories, and by showing a picture that you took yourself, this is the perfect opportunity to tell the story.We looked at some short story introductions earlier, but let's look in more detail.The Beach PictureI took this picture of my friend Alex when we went on holiday last year. We went to this great beach, and the weather was just fantastic.Alex was in a really good mood that day and was jumping around on the sand.As he jumped in the air, I grabbed my camera and took a picture of him. It just shows him at the right angle as he is smiling and leaping in the air.The Dog PictureI was with my friend and my dog, Bingo. It was a few weeks ago, and Bingo wanted to play with us. My friend had a ball and threw it at Bingo for him to catch it.He was just about to throw the ball, and I took a picture of Bingo.The Red House PictureI was out in a field near where my friend lives. He lives in the countryside and this house sat in the middle of a field. I asked him if anyone lived there and he said no. He said the house has been empty for as long as he can remember.It didn't look very inviting. There was no glass in the windows and inside was completely empty.If it is your picture, you must have a story to tell about it. And if you are doing a presentation using a photograph, then telling a story to accompany it is a great thing to do.Please read my article on How To Tell A Story for more advice about using story and storytelling.ConclusionDescribing a picture or photograph should be easy. As long as you describe the picture in order, you should be fine.Just remember the order:the main subjectthe backgroundthe foregroundthe details of other objects, people or things in the pictureyour thoughts or opinionsa storyIf you follow these steps, you should be able to describe or talk about any picture in English.Take a look at some pictures on the internet and try to describe them by yourself right now. The more you practice, the more you will improve.And remember — let me know your thoughts in the comments below!