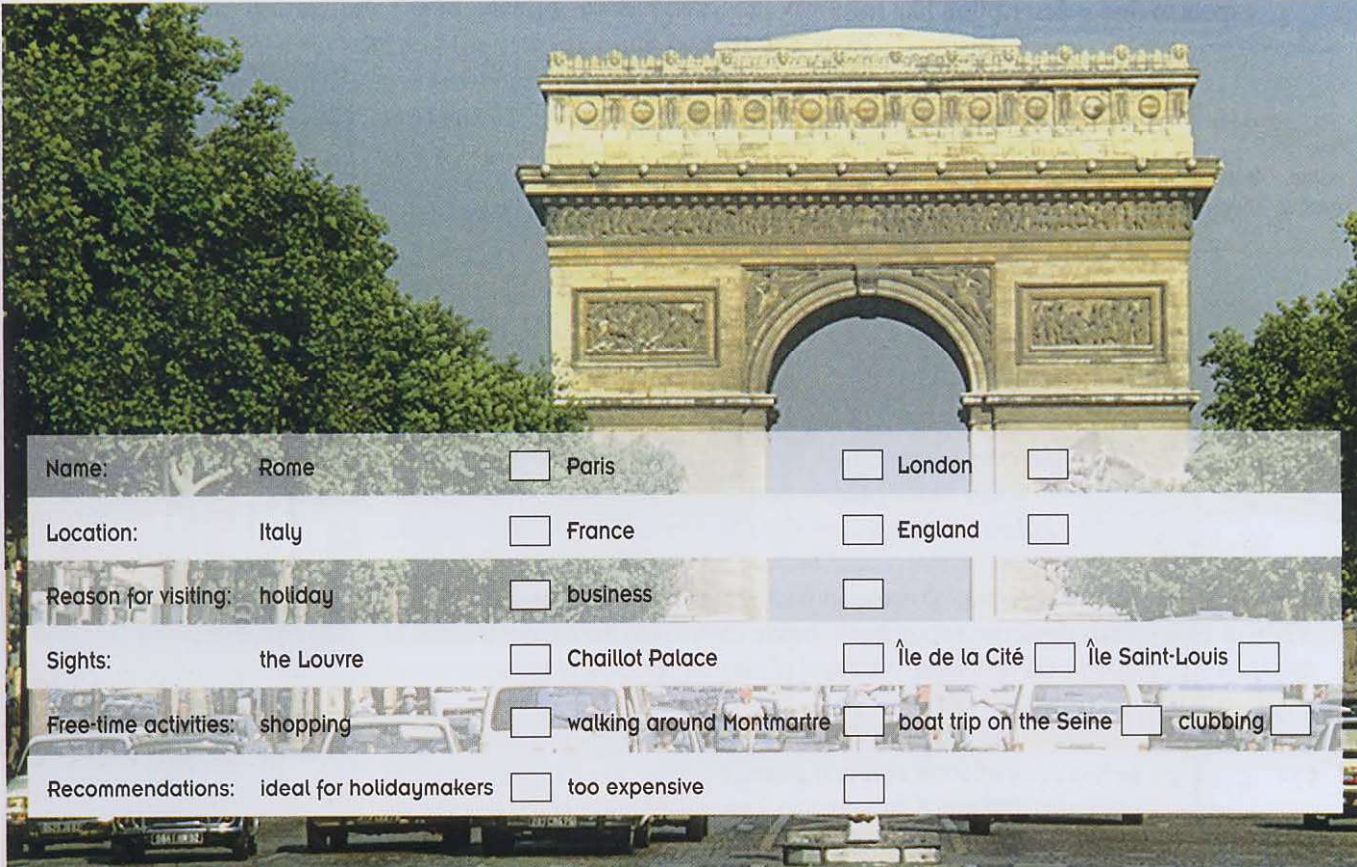


UNIT 2 Describing Places/Buildings

1 Read the following table, then listen to the cassette and tick the information mentioned. Finally, use the table to talk about Sally's trip.



Name:	Rome	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paris	<input type="checkbox"/>	London	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Location:	Italy	<input type="checkbox"/>	France	<input type="checkbox"/>	England	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Reason for visiting:	holiday	<input type="checkbox"/>	business	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sights:	the Louvre	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chailot Palace	<input type="checkbox"/>	Île de la Cité	<input type="checkbox"/>	Île Saint-Louis	<input type="checkbox"/>
Free-time activities:	shopping	<input type="checkbox"/>	walking around Montmartre	<input type="checkbox"/>	boat trip on the Seine	<input type="checkbox"/>	clubbing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recommendations:	ideal for holidaymakers	<input type="checkbox"/>	too expensive	<input type="checkbox"/>				

A descriptive composition about a place or building should consist of:

- an **introduction** in which you identify it, give its exact location and state the reason for choosing it;
- a **main body** in which you describe the main aspects of the place or building in detail; and
- a **conclusion** in which you mention your feelings and your final thoughts about the place or give a recommendation.

Such pieces of writing can be found as articles in newspapers, tourist magazines or brochures, or as part of a story or letter.

Points to consider

- A wide variety of adjectives (*enormous, delightful, etc.*) and adverbs (*horribly, beautifully, etc.*) will make your description more interesting.
- Use of the senses (hearing, sight, smell, taste, touch) as well as narrative techniques to start and finish your composition will make your description more vivid. *e.g. On entering the hospital I was struck by the strong smell of antiseptic.*
- Present tenses should be used when describing a place/building for a tourist brochure. Past tenses should be used when you describe a visit to a place or building which took place in the past. First and second conditionals (will/would) can be used when you describe your ideal house/city, etc.

Introduction

Paragraph 1

set the scene (name & location of the place/ building, reason(s) for choosing the place/ building)

Main Body

Paragraphs 2, 3

overall look and particular details (Place: sights, facilities, free-time activities Building: first look and specific details)

Conclusion

feelings & final thoughts about the place/building and/or a recommendation

2 Read the model below and write down the topic of each paragraph. Are there any sights of special interest? What can holidaymakers do? Where would you expect to find a description like this?

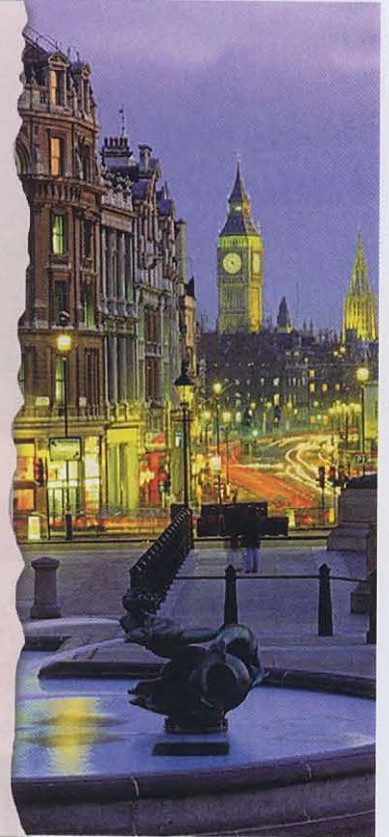
name, location
(London, England)

Set in the heart of southern England, London is one of the biggest and busiest cities in Europe. A truly international city, London attracts millions of visitors every year from all over the world, yet never loses its own unique charm.

London has many impressive sights to see, ranging from the historical beauty of St Paul's Cathedral and Big Ben to Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament. In this city of contrasts, you can be walking along one of the busiest streets, yet still be less than a mile from one of the many huge, peaceful parks. London is a great cultural centre, too; the National Gallery contains one of the finest collections of classical paintings in the world.

London is also well known for other things apart from its monuments and art galleries. Shoppers will enjoy visiting the department stores on Oxford Street or they could try Harrods, the most exclusive shop in London. For evening entertainment, the choice of theatres is enormous. From the famous Southbank Theatre complex to the smaller theatres of Covent Garden, there is no end of plays to see. Soho and its pavement cafés are also worth visiting.

London is an exceptional place, a truly modern city that has managed to keep its traditional style and sense of history. You may get exhausted in London, but one thing is certain; you will never get bored because, as Dr Johnson once said, "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life."



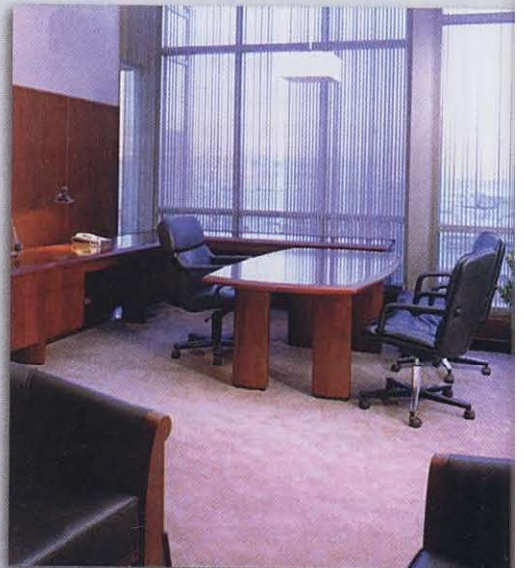
3 Read the model and fill in the missing prepositions. Then, write down the topic of each paragraph. Where would you expect to find a description like this?

My father works for a large company which is located 1) a huge skyscraper in the city centre.

His office, which is 2) the seventh floor, is spacious and bright due to the natural light coming in 3) the large, full-length windows. It is peaceful too, as a result of its position high 4) the traffic-filled city streets.

The interior is very comfortable. Long curtains hang 5) the ceiling all the way down 6) the pale pink carpet and there are several potted plants 7) one corner of the room. My father's wooden desk with its luxurious black leather chairs, is situated 8) the window so he can look 9) over the city. 10) his chair there is a large wood-panelled cupboard where he keeps his files.

My father's office is a very pleasant working environment and I am sure that working there helps to make his job a lot easier.



- 4** The following extracts include descriptions of atmosphere. Read them and underline the phrases which describe use of the senses (i.e. *sight, hearing, etc.*) and identify each sense, e.g. *rustling (hearing)*. Then say which of the extracts could be part of a story and which part of a tourist brochure.

A Funfair

Even before you enter the funfair you can hear the sound of loud music playing and the shrieks of people on the rides. As you go in, you may be tempted by the smell of fresh popcorn and candy-floss. Lights are flashing and people are bustling everywhere. From the Big Wheel you have a breathtaking view over the whole town.



B Restaurant

The moment we entered the restaurant we began to feel hungry, as the delicious smells of fine cooking reached us from the kitchen. Soft music and quiet conversation created a relaxing atmosphere. A smiling waiter came over to take our order, and we sat back on comfortable cushioned chairs.



C Mountain Village

As you stand on the balcony of the mountain chalet, the cold crisp air makes your skin tingle. All you can hear is the sighing of the wind in the pine trees. The snow-covered mountains in the distance contrast with the thick green forest surrounding the resort.



D Jungle

As we were walking through the jungle, we could hear the rustling of leaves and the screeching of parrots. The scent of wet earth and exotic flowers filled the warm, moist air, which was delightful to breathe.

Two sentences can be joined together by using past participles. Instead of writing: *The village is surrounded by mountains. The village has a peaceful atmosphere.*
You can write: **Surrounded** by mountains, the village has a peaceful atmosphere.

5 Rewrite the sentences beginning each one with past participles.

- 1 Paris is dominated by the Eiffel Tower. Paris is well known for its architecture.

- 2 The swimming pool is located near the city centre. The swimming pool is very popular with city residents.
3 The hotel is sheltered by trees on either side. The hotel is a favourite with people who want a quiet holiday.
4 The town is hidden beyond a range of mountains. The town is best known for its wine industry.

Unit 2 Describing Places/Buildings

6 Look at the following list of phrases and match them with the pictures, then identify each sense used. Finally read the example and write short descriptions for any two of the pictures.

crowded streets, glossy green peppers, burning sand, icy cold air, colourful shop signs, snow-covered mountains, whistle of cold wind, crystal-clear water, tall buildings, car horns beeping, fresh scent of pines, swaying palm trees, acrid smell of old tomatoes, hurrying passers-by, colourful stalls, exotic plants, towering peaks, shrill cries of tropical birds, soft snow, cheerfully shouting stallholders, salty sea smell



.....

icy cold air (touch)

.....



.....



7 Look at the following tables, then listen to this person describing what her home town used to be like and what it is like now and complete the missing information. How does the author feel about the changes? Looking at the notes, talk about how the writer's home town has changed. Then write a description of what your town was like forty years ago and what it is like now.



THEN

- fields she used to play in
- small road on the outskirts
- house she grew up in
- old stone bridge
- old houses

NOW

- huge supermarket
- major
- new
- wider..... bridge
- new

e.g. *The icy cold air blew around the towering peaks of the snow-covered mountains. The fresh scent of pines filled the air. I heard the whistle of the cold wind as the soft snow fell around us. No view on earth could be more wonderful.*

e.g. *A huge supermarket has been built in the fields the author used to play in. A motorway has been ...*

Descriptions of places can be found in travel brochures, letters, magazine articles and stories. They can be written in a formal or informal style depending on whom they are addressed to and how the writer wants to present the description. For example, a description of a place you visited in a letter to a friend would be informal, while a description of a place in a travel brochure could be written in a formal style. It could also be written in a less formal style when the writer wants to sound more persuasive. This can be achieved by writing in a more personal style, addressing the reader directly.

Characteristics of Formal and Informal Style

Formal Style: impersonal style, frequent use of passive voice, complex sentences, use of participles, non-colloquial English, no descriptions of feelings/emotions, short forms acceptable only in quotes, advanced vocabulary

Less Formal Style: personal style, use of idioms, address the reader, chatty descriptions, variety of adjectives, use of short forms, non-colloquial English

Informal Style: personal style, use of colloquial English (idiomatic expressions), use of idioms, use of short forms, chatty descriptions

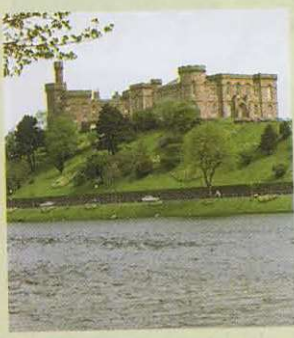
8 Read the following extracts and say: a) what style of language has been used for each one, justifying your answers; b) where each extract has been taken from; and c) what the content of each extract is.



C Take a trip up the Eiffel Tower to witness the spectacular view, and if you are an art lover you should spend at least a day in the famous Louvre Art Museum. Evenings can be spent in one of the great number of cafés and bistros, where you can sample delicious French cuisine.



D We both feel so relaxed after our holiday in Switzerland, I don't know why we have never been there before. I'd recommend it to anyone who wants to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city and breathe some fresh air. We'll definitely be going back next year.



A A visit to the Scottish Highlands is recommended to those who are in search of a peaceful holiday and the opportunity to enjoy some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. One place especially worth visiting for those who are interested in folklore is Loch Ness, famous for its monster.

(formal: impersonal style, complex sentences - part of a travel brochure or magazine article - reasons for visiting)

B The smell of the air, the colours, the bustle of the people and the sound of their excited voices all told Jim he was in Venice. Venice was Jim's favourite city, but this time he wasn't here on holiday. He knew that sooner or later they would find him here. Jim chose a quiet little hotel, tucked away in a back alley. In his room he drew the curtains and sat back, planning his next move.



Unit 2 Describing Places/Buildings

Narrative techniques can be used when you describe a place or building. You can start or end your description by:

- using your senses to describe the weather, surroundings, etc.
- asking a rhetorical question (a question which expects no answer)
- using direct speech
- describing people's feelings or reactions about the place or building
- using a quotation (e.g. *As Dr Samuel Johnson once said, "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life."*)
- creating mystery, anticipation or suspense
- addressing the reader

9 The following sentences are beginnings or endings for a description of a cottage. Read them and say which are beginnings and which are endings, then identify the narrative techniques which have been used each time.

1 Have you ever wanted to live in an old cottage by the Atlantic, with granite walls more than a metre thick, built to withstand the ocean gales? That's where my grandparents live.

2 As I got onto the ferry I repeated to myself, "A mother's love is a blessing no matter where you roam," thinking of the family I was leaving behind in their cosy stone cottage by the sea.

3 I shivered in the chilly drizzle as I turned off the main road past the harbour, heading for my grandparents' cottage. The house, built of granite, seemed to suffer nothing from the strong wind.

4 "Good luck, and may God be with you," said the old man in Gaelic as I glanced back at my grandparents' stone cottage and then walked towards the harbour.

5 I turned off the main road past the harbour and headed for my grandparents' cottage. There it was, its granite walls standing proudly. There was something strange, though. There was no smoke coming from the chimney and it looked abandoned. I shivered as I approached it.

6 As I prepared to leave, I realised that something about visiting my grandparents' cottage always makes me feel safe and secure. Perhaps it's those solid granite walls, or maybe I never feel quite at home or at peace until I'm standing by the old house by the harbour. Whatever it is, that house means more to me than any treasure on earth.

10 Your teacher has asked you to describe a) a visit to a castle, b) a famous holiday resort in your country. Write possible beginnings and endings for each description, using as many narrative techniques as possible.

- When you describe places, you may use prepositional phrases and verbs. Prepositional phrases such as *all around, to the left of, at the top of, as far as the eye can see*, etc are used to describe static features. Verbs such as *flow, run, stretch, wind, curve, rise*, etc are used to describe features which suggest movement.

11 Underline the words or phrases which describe moving features and circle those which describe static features.



The grand old house is situated at the end of a long country lane which runs through a small wood. To the left of the house is the coachman's lodge, and as far as the eye can see there is green grass and tall, spreading trees. Beyond the house is a grey rocky mountain and on the other side of it lies a small village with old cottages and a little church in the village square.

- 12** Read the following description given in a jumbled order and put the paragraphs in the correct order. Then underline the phrases which involve the senses. Which tenses have been used and why?

The House of my Dreams

A My house would have a large, bright kitchen where I could sit quietly at a wooden table admiring the view of the garden through the window. My living room would be simple, with basic furniture like a long soft sofa and two large armchairs. It would also have a fireplace so I could keep warm on cold windy nights. There would also be several wooden bookcases full of books to keep me company. My bedroom would have a four-poster bed with a white linen bed cover and the walls would be painted a soothing pale blue.

B It would be a small wooden cottage surrounded by a neat green lawn stretching all the way down to a river. There would be colourful flowers gently swaying in the cool breeze and an orchard at the back of the house with trees full of sweet and juicy oranges, apples and pears.

C If I could choose, I would live in a house just like this with its beautiful natural surroundings and peaceful atmosphere.

D Imagine waking up to the sound of birds singing in the trees outside and warm sunlight shining through your bedroom window. This is what I dream of when I imagine my ideal house.



- 13** Read the model below and correct the mistakes. Write **S** for spelling, **WO** for word order, **G** for grammar, **P** for punctuation or **WW** for wrong word. What is the topic of each paragraph?

G "of" omitted

A visit to a Museum

Standing outside **of** the British Museum last week, I **had ignored** the pouring rain as I gazed up at the **marble tall** columns, unprepared for the dignified beauty of the famous building. Ms Green, our teacher, **she hurried** us inside, impatient to **show to us** all the artefacts of the ancient **greek and egyptian** civilizations which we **had studying** in our history class.

Inside, the museum was **quiet** impressive. The gentle hum of voices echoed through huge halls with polished marble floors and sweeping staircases as we **were followed** Ms Green on tiptoe to the section with the Greek exhibits.

We **in admiration gasped** at the beautiful sculptures displayed there. The delicate features and graceful bodies of the figures were **such** lifelike that they looked more **as** actual people turned to stone than carvings from thousands of years **before**.

The Egyptian display was even more breathtaking. Huge statues towered above us, gleaming with gold, and beautiful **jewelry** filled the display cases.

It was like waking from a lovely dream when Ms Green whispered that it was time for us to go. I **saw** a long, final look, reluctant to **live** these magical rooms, before I **had followed** my classmates to the **bus waiting** and the real world outside.

- 14** Write one of the topics below in the appropriate style using 120-180 words.

- 1 The town council is running a competition entitled "The house I like most in my neighbourhood". Write a description for the competition.
- 2 A travel magazine is running a competition and has asked its readers to submit descriptions of a place they think is ideal for holidays. Write your description for the competition.
- 3 Your teacher has asked you to write about a visit to the zoo. Write your description for your teacher.