

Student's Name

Professor's Name

Course Name/Code

Date

Descriptive Writing Example

A college dorm room during finals week looks nothing like it did in September. The desk that once held a single laptop and a neat stack of notebooks now disappears under three coffee mugs, a half-eaten bag of pretzels, and a tangle of charging cables that no longer match any device currently in use. Empty energy drink cans line the windowsill like a small, glinting skyline. The trash can overflows with crumpled study guides, and a single highlighter, capless and drying out, has rolled under the bed and been forgotten.

The lighting tells its own story. The overhead light stays off most nights, replaced by the colder, more forgiving glow of a desk lamp angled directly at a laptop screen. That screen itself is a patchwork of open tabs: lecture slides, a half-finished study guide, three browser windows for the same search query phrased slightly differently, and, somewhere near the back of the row, a tab that has nothing to do with school at all. The room smells like instant coffee and the particular staleness of a window that has not been opened in four days.

Sound fills in what the eyes miss. A roommate's playlist plays low enough to be background noise but loud enough to notice during the quiet stretches between typing. Somewhere down the hall, someone laughs too loudly for the hour, and the sound carries through walls that were never built to block much of anything. Every so often, a phone buzzes against a desk, and the owner glances at it, decides it can wait, and goes back to the page in front of them.

The bed has become a second desk. A laptop sits propped against a pillow, a stack of color-coded notecards spreads across the comforter, and somewhere underneath all of it, the

actual blanket is still doing its job, just barely. Clothes that were clean three days ago sit in a pile on the chair, since the chair itself is currently occupied by a backpack, three textbooks, and a planner that has not been opened since the semester started.

What separates this room from the version that existed a week earlier is not the furniture or the layout, it is the evidence of effort scattered across every surface. The sticky notes on the mirror, scrawled with formulas and half-finished thoughts, the printed schedule taped to the closet door with deadlines circled in red, the second monitor borrowed from a friend down the hall and propped on a stack of textbooks because there was nowhere else for it to go. Nothing in the room is decorative anymore. Every object earns its place by being useful right now, today, before the next exam.

By the time finals week ends, the room will look almost unrecognizable again, this time in the other direction. The mugs will get washed, the cans will get recycled, the desk will reappear under the surface it was hiding. But for now, during the week itself, the room is less a place to live and more a staging ground, every inch of it organized around a single, temporary purpose: getting through the next seventy-two hours one page at a time.

This type of writing works because it appeals to the senses rather than just stating facts. Instead of writing the room was messy, the description shows specific objects, sounds, and smells that let the reader picture the scene without being told directly how to feel about it. That distinction, showing instead of declaring, is what separates strong descriptive writing inside an expository essay from a simple list of observations.