

The 5 Senses That Make Scenes Come Alive (PDF)

Strong scenes don't describe everything. They choose the right senses at the right moment. Below are 15 sensory words for each sense group. Use them naturally—never as a list inside your prose.

Sight — Visual Sensory Words

Visual Sensory Word	Effect	Example Sentence
Glistening	Reflects light	Sweat glistened on her skin.
Shadow-soaked	Dark, moody	The alley was shadow-soaked.
Sun-bleached	Worn, faded	Bones lay sun-bleached.
Flickering	Unstable	Candlelight flickered wildly.
Dust-coated	Old, abandoned	Books sat dust-coated.
Blurred	Confusion	Faces blurred in the rain.
Glimmering	Hope	Stars glimmered faintly.
Murky	Mystery	Water turned murky.
Jagged	Harshness	Rocks rose jagged.
Dappled	Soft light	Sunlight dappled the path.
Grim-streaked	Neglect	Walls were grim-streaked.
Luminous	Bright focus	Moon glowed luminous.
Tarnished	Decay	Silver turned tarnished.
Opalescent	Dreamlike	Shells shone opalescent.
Smudged	Careless	Windows sat smudged.

Sound — Auditory Sensory Words

Auditory Sensory Word	Example Sentence
Crackling	Leaves crackled underfoot.
Murmuring	Stream murmured softly.
Buzzing	Bees buzzed around flowers.
Echoing	Voice echoed in cave.
Hollow	Footsteps sounded hollow.
Tinny	Music played tinny.
Clattering	Dishes clattered in sink.
Rustling	Wind rustled curtains.
Thudding	Heart thudded in chest.
Whisper-thin	Whisper-thin voice faded.
Shrill	Whistle blew shrill.
Droning	Planes droned overhead.
Muffled	Voices muffled through door.
Rhythmic	Waves beat rhythmic.
Rattling	Windows rattled in storm.

Touch → Tactile Sensory Words

Tactile Sensory Word	Example Sentence
Gritty	Sand felt gritty underfoot.
Velvety	Rose was velvety soft.
Clammy	Hands clammy with fear.
Scalding	Touched scalding steam.
Prickling	Goosebumps prickling skin.

Tactile Sensory Word	Example Sentence
Icy	Icy wind chilled fingers.
Slick	Road slick with rain.
Rough-edged	Rocks rough-edged cut deep.
Trembling	Leaves trembling in breeze.
Brittle	Ice cracked brittle.
Heavy	Blanket weighed heavy.
Feathery	Wings brushed feathery.
Coarse	Rope burned coarse.
Sticky	Gum clung sticky.
Numb	Fingers numb cold.
Burning	Coals scorched burning.
Stiff	Muscles ached stiff.
Soaked	Clothes soaked instantly.
Leathery	Skin wrinkled leathery.

Smell — Olfactory Sensory Words

Olfactory Sensory Word	Example Sentence
Musty	Attic smelled musty.
Incense-thick	Smoke incense-thick filled room.
Rain-soaked	Earth rain-soaked fresh.
Metallic	Blood metallic tang.
Charred	Wood smoked charred.
Sweet-rotting	Apples sweet-rotting drew wasps.

Olfactory Sensory Word	Example Sentence
Smoky	Embers lingered smoky.
Floral	Perfume drifted floral.
Sour	Milk spoiled sour.
Briny	Waves crashed briny.
Earthy	Soil scented earthy.
Stale	Air hung stale.
Oily	Rags reeked oily.
Sharp	Ammonia cleaned sharp.
Musky	Perfume seduced musky.

Taste — Gustatory Sensory Words

Gustatory Sensory Words	Example Sentence
Bitter-sharp	Coffee hit bitter-sharp.
Syrupy	Honey dripped syrupy.
Buttery	Toast melted buttery.
Ashy	Smoke coated ashy.
Tang-bitten	Lemon tang-bitten sharp.
Spiced	Tea steamed spiced.
Metallic	Blood tasted metallic.
Sugary	Candy dissolved sugary.
Sour-edged	Apple sour-edged bite.
Nutty	Bread smelled nutty.
Smoky	Meat grilled smoky.

Gustatory Sensory Words	Example Sentence
Bland	Porridge tasted bland.
Zesty	Lime zested lips.
Oily	Fish fried oily.
Salty	Tears flowed salty.

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