

As part of your GCSE writing task, you may be asked to write a descriptive piece in response to a picture.

To practise this writing task you could pick up a holiday brochure from a travel agent or find an image online. Here are two photos you could use:

**Picture 1: A street in Barcelona, Spain**



Picture 2: Hot air balloons



Choose one of these images or one you have found yourself.

In order to get the most marks for this piece of writing, you need to REALLY study the picture. Notice every detail so that you have plenty to write about.

Here are some tips:

- **Comment on the atmosphere of the photo.** In picture 1, it's quiet and secluded.
- **Approach the picture from top to bottom.** In picture 1, start with the brightness of the sky and move down to describe the stones of the walls, the arch, balconies, streetlights and so on.
- **Use a range of sentence structures.** Make some long and complex, and use shorter ones for impact. Vary paragraph length too - it makes your writing seem confident if you can use structure, as well as language, to convey your meaning. So if you were describing the fairground in picture 2, you could write:

*The fairground was irresistible. Flags fluttered between the azure helter-skelter and the sunshine-yellow Ferris wheel; it was as if the warm breeze was inviting us to surrender ourselves to the simple pleasure of twirling and spinning on this perfect summer's day.*

- **Try to use a range of techniques.** For example metaphors, similes, alliteration, assonance, sibilance, personification and so on. In picture 1 you could describe the streetlights as 'indestructible iron guardians of the alley'.
- **Use more advanced punctuation.** For example colons, semi-colons, parentheses, hyphens and dashes. For picture 2 you could write:  
*The balloons - all sweeping joyfully into the warmth of the sapphire-blue sky - dominated the view.*
- **Use imaginative words for colours.** The stones in picture 1 aren't just white and grey; they could be ivory, pearl and honey. The large balloon in picture 2 could be crimson, apricot and gold, rather than red, orange and yellow.

### Task

When you have decided which image to use, write a quick plan. A plan is an effective way to sort your ideas before you start writing. The plan could include:

- key details
- ideas for similes, metaphors etc.
- brief order of events
- ideas for an engaging opening
- ideas about the ending.