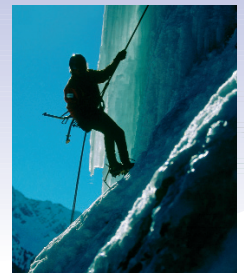


8.1 Using descriptive detail in non-fiction writing



In your lesson, you will have explored the myth that there are many 'Eskimo' words for snow. One of the reasons for the myth is that, in Eskimo languages, one word will contain lots of different elements, whereas in some other languages, more than one word will be needed to communicate the same idea. In English, we often need to use an expanded noun phrase to communicate a precise idea.



★ Noun phrases

Noun phrases can:

- ★ Be just one noun: **Joe** ascended the mountain.
- ★ Be a determiner and noun: **The climber** ascended the mountain.
- ★ Include a range of adjectives before the noun: **The brave young British climber** ascended the mountain.
- ★ Be modified with extra information after the noun, e.g. with prepositional phrases: **The brave young British climber with the red jacket** ascended the mountain, or **The brave young British climber at the top of Base Camp** ascended the mountain.
- ★ Be modified with extra information after the noun using 'who', 'which' or 'that' or using -ing verbs, e.g. **The brave young British climber, who had won several awards for his previous climbs**, ascended the mountain, or **The brave young British climber, sweeping aside all his fears and thinking only of victory**, ascended the mountain.

TASK > > > >

Discuss with a partner which of these two sentences works better. There is no right answer, but you need to be able to explain your choice:

- > The icy dagger fell.
- > The slick razor-sharp icicle, hanging like a madman's lethal blade from the ceiling of the cave, finally fell.

TASK > > > >

- 1 Take these two sentences containing a simple noun phrase and add adjectives before the noun to make them more precise and vivid for the reader.
 - > **The** **blizzard** raged on.
 - > **A** **snowflake** drifted past.(You could choose from these or use your own: *howling, screaming, icy cold, frightening, bright white, dainty, beautiful, delicate.*)
- 2 Now take your sentences and add extra information after the noun.
(You could choose from these or use your own: *which had started in the far north; which showed no signs of stopping; with huge chips of stinging ice; gently; slowly and lazily; followed by a soft cloud.*)