**1. DEFINITIONS**

1. **Frequently used verb forms for definitions**

**Present simple** (active and passive)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| X | is…..  means ….  describes…  is defined as…  is used… |

Example:

A dialect **is** a variety of language. It **is spoken** in one part of a country.

A mineral **is** a structurally homogeneous solid of definite chemical composition. It **is formed** by the inorganic processes of nature.

Criminology **is** the study of crime or illegal acts.

Psychiatry **is** the study and treatment of mental illness.

1. **Relative clauses**

Relative clauses are often used to qualify or give extra information:

*An X is someone who sells Y.*

*Y is something which is produced by Z.*

*Plastics are compounds which are made with long chains of carbon atoms.*

1. **Useful verbs:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| X | is concerned with  deals with  relates to  involves | Y |

# **Description and definition – what’s the difference?**

**Statements for discussion**

1. Definition is used to explain a concept or an idea.
2. The author [of a definition] is like a teacher to the reader, while the writer of a description just works as the eyes for the reader.
3. A description doesn’t need to be only about an object; a feeling or an image could also be described.
4. What is described is usually particular and cannot be used to make reference to a universal concept.
5. If we think of a definition of something unknown (a recently discovered wild animal, for instance), then it becomes clear to us that it is almost impossible to define something without describing it.
6. A description, on the other hand, is more descriptive.
7. To describe something is to give characteristics of a specific thing, characteristics which make it unique in the world.
8. To make a definition is to give concepts that can construct a general idea about what something is.
9. It is possible to describe something without defining it, but not the other way around.
10. The topic for a description can be broad, and involve more than one concept; the topic for a definition must be narrow and involve a single concept.
11. A description is written when the thing, object or happening is already known; a definition is written when the thing, person, object or event is unknown.
12. Objects, places, situations, procedures, the way people do something are topics for description because we can give specific information about them.
13. Everything we can see, taste, smell or take are objects of description.
14. We can define abstract terms, names, expressions, a specific kind of people.
15. When you describe something you are not defining it; but you can try to define something by describing it.
16. Definition is more abstract than defining [sic].
17. It is difficult to think that you can write a definition of any subject and be glad with your accomplishment: something is always missing.
18. Usually we use description when it comes to concrete objects, such as a simple chair or a city. A definition usually involves abstract terms, like feelings or ideas.
19. [A description] will be performed in a more objective way, since forms and colors don’t leave room for discussion.
20. A definition can depend on the person’s beliefs, culture and point of view. That is why a definition is not objective.
21. When you describe something, you give the characteristics of a term or object. When you define something, you say what [something] really is.
22. Description is a detailed way to demonstrate your opinion, or point of view about something. [In a definition] the opinions are usually shared because the writer uses things of the common sense to define it.
23. To say things in general is definition and to say them in particular is description.
24. A description can be defined as OBJECTIVE, if the author presents the information as facts or SUBJECTIVE if he just expresses his opinion.
25. Descriptions usually are more specific; in definitions, the concepts are more general.
26. We cannot define a chair without saying it is made of wood, metal, etc.

# **Definition suggested topics**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. “caipirinha” 2. “patricinha” 3. “saudade” 4. alcoholism 5. arthritis 6. backbone 7. bar 8. betrayal 9. biological physics 10. boredom 11. boss 12. champion athlete 13. character 14. charisma 15. charm 16. chic 17. chutzpah 18. class (as in “classy”) 19. clone 20. cockroach 21. coffee 22. communication 23. dedicated person 24. dessert 25. diabetes | 1. dog 2. dying town 3. epilepsy 4. flags 5. funny movie 6. good hamburger 7. happiness 8. hate 9. healthy lifestyle 10. high-stress job 11. holiday 12. husband of the 21st Century 13. ideal student 14. integrity 15. lack of inspiration 16. liberated woman 17. low blood sugar 18. LPs 19. lunchtime 20. money 21. moors 22. ocean 23. perfect boy(girl)friend | 1. perfect day 2. pet 3. pizzas 4. presidents 5. problem 6. racist 7. rain 8. raindrops 9. Salvador Dali 10. scuba diving 11. skiing 12. stamps 13. style 14. successful politician 15. sunset 16. surrealism 17. teacher 18. teenagers 19. thriller movie 20. toilet 21. traffic in São Paulo at 6 o’clock 22. web designer 23. World Cup 24. writing mistakes |