**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 withdeals withrelates toinvolves  |  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**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 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
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