

Sensory Verbs

Intermediate English, Week 3, Spring 2021

The five senses

- People have five senses: seeing, hearing, taste, smell, and touch
- The senses use different parts of your body
 - Seeing – eyes
 - Hearing – ears
 - Taste – mouth
 - Smell – nose
 - Touch – hands, feet, etc.
- We use certain verbs to describe these senses. They are *sensory verbs*

Verbs for seeing

- *See* – something is in your sight, you see it with your eyes
 - Turn left and you will see my house.
- *Watch* – you look at something closely, usually for a longer time
 - We watched TV for two hours last night.
- *Look* – can be an action or state (description)
 - Action – look at something (on purpose) with your eyes
 - The doctor looked inside my ears with a small light.
 - Stative – say what something looks like
 - That bridge looks old and unsafe.

Verbs for hearing

- *Hear* – something you hear with your ears
 - I can hear the birds singing outside in the garden.
- *Listen* – actively hearing something or paying attention to it
 - You should listen to the teacher when she talks
- *Sound* – can be for an action or state, but usually is stative (describes)
 - The fire alarm sounded, so we left the building. (*this use is not common*)
 - Classical music sounds calm and relaxing.
 - The wind sounds like someone crying.

Verbs for taste

- *Taste* can be an active verb or a stative verb
- Action – to try a little of a food or drink
 - I didn't recognize that fruit, so I tasted it.
- Stative – the flavor of something when it is eaten
 - That chocolate cake tasted delicious!
 - I don't like this tea. It tastes like grass.

Verbs for smell

- The verb *smell* can also be for an action or a state
- Action – someone smells something with their nose
 - My dog always smells the trees and grass.
- State – tells us information about the smell of something
 - Your garbage smells bad. You should take it outside.
 - The house smells like chocolate. Did you bake cookies today?

Verbs for touch

- *Touch* – an active verb, using part of the body
 - The cat looked friendly, so I touched it.
 - Don't touch the stove! It's hot!
- *Feel* – can be an action or a state, for objects or emotions
 - Action: She felt the stone walls of the house.
 - State: This pillow feels like a cloud. (object)
 - State: I feel so tired today. (emotion)

Stative (description) verbs

- Like we just saw, *look, sound, taste, smell, and feel* can be used for actions or descriptions
- When we use them to describe something, they are *stative verbs*. They describe something that does not easily change
- Most of the time, we use them with an **adjective** or a simile (**like + noun**)
 - The plants look **sick**.
 - This shampoo smells **awful**.
 - The thunder sounds **like a drum**.
 - This flavor of ice cream tastes **like coffee**.

Action or state?

1. The boy smelled the flowers in the garden. **Active**
2. The salad dressing tasted horrible. **Stative**
3. She felt the dog's fur with her hand. **Active**
4. We looked under the bed, but the cat wasn't there. **Active**
5. The train sounded like thunder. **Stative**
6. The chef tasted the sauce to make sure it was perfect. **Active**
7. This perfume smells like roses and lilacs. **Stative**
8. His new car looks really ugly. **Stative**

Fix the mistakes

1. His apartment looked ~~like~~ old and dirty.
2. The dog smelled ~~like~~ the meat on the table.
3. The chef tasted ~~delicious~~. ^{the food} (or, "The chef's food tasted delicious.")
4. That dress ~~sees~~ ^{looks} very beautiful on you.