

> TIP SHEET

USING OBSERVATION

- Use a notebook, camera, camera phone or sketchbook to record your observations. Unless you have a photographic memory, never rely on your memory alone. Trends tend to be identified by, or associated with, very particular details and the forecaster's job is to note these accurately.
- Record observations as a brief, tight, adjective-friendly list. For example: 'a lacquer-finish chair' rather than 'a chair'. Use words and phrases that will help you and others 'visualize' the object you are describing.
- Be as specific as you can, layering the descriptive adjectives and nouns you use in the order that best helps you remember what it is you are describing. For example: 'a soft russet Harris tweed jacket with brushed gold lining, hand-stitched armholes, and wallet pocket to the left' better captures the jacket you are looking at than 'a tweedy brown jacket'. The latter phrase gives no sense of the jacket's style, fit, etc. — the details in the first description have been used to give it character.
- When noting what a person is wearing you should always describe him or her from the head down, and from the inner layers of clothing to the outer ones. Remember to note down any jewellery he or she is wearing, all body adornments (tattooing, body piercing, etc.) and accessories being held or worn.
- Some forecasters formalize this process by placing people inside an imaginary 'description wheel' or Vitruvian Man-style circle, which allows them to more accurately pinpoint or record key items of interest along a north, south, east, west axis.
- Sketch or photograph people if you can.
- Descriptions of a room or retail interior can be recalled in a similar manner. By casting an imaginary grid across the space, you can assemble a 'word picture' of a room, bar, club or retail interior. By working in a clockwise manner from top to bottom and from left to right of this fictional grid, you can draw an imaginary circle or wheel in the air with your eyes as they pass over all objects in the room.
- Don't confuse observation with understanding what is being observed. It is important to ask questions about what you are observing and noting so that the bigger context of a set of actions or dress codes can be more fully understood.