



Go to a mall, restaurant, coffee house, or other public space. Watch the people around you. Take notes.

1. What they are wearing?
2. What do their mannerisms, posture, clothes, and accessories and accessories tell you about them?
3. Note down their identifying features: height, hair color, approximate age, etc. What do these details tell you about them?
4. Are they with someone? If so, who?
5. Are they having a conversation with someone or on their phone? Listen in. Take notes.
6. Pay attention to the rise and fall of their voices, accent, inflections, tone. Are they speaking casually, angry, or animated?
7. Look at occupants of the other tables. What does the body language tell you about their relationship? Are they drawn toward one another or positioned as far away as they can get? Do they choose seats next to one another or across the table?
8. Do they appear happy to be there or upset?
9. Are they working, reading, or writing on a laptop or notebook?
10. What can you see from the angle of your position?



11. If in a cafe or restaurant, take note of the servers. What do they look like?
12. Do they appear relaxed, frazzled, friendly, or angry?
13. Where are the exits? How hard is it to get in and out?
14. Are there windows in the bathroom?
15. Is it busy or slow?
16. Is it tucked away in a remote corner or located in a busy strip mall or along a main street?
17. Would it be a good place for a secret rendezvous or the worst possible place to meet someone?
18. How hard is it to reach in terms of traffic and parking?
19. How easily could a person blend in?
20. Where are good places to hide to observe the room?

Hopefully, this exercise has helped you look at your surroundings in a new way and you can better assist your characters with their detection. Even if you don't write mysteries, these exercises are a good way to hone your observational skills because every character lives, works, and plays somewhere! For more information on scene writing visit <http://www.dianahurwitz.com> for free downloads and pick up a copy of Story Building Blocks: The Four Layers of Conflict available in [e-book](#) and [print](#).