(Thanks to Jerry—Source?)

**20 Elements of Setting: You should know these for every scene you write—even if only a handful of the details make it into the story.**

1. Where does the scene take place? (If it’s on a road, name the road; if a restaurant, know the name of the restaurant and the road it’s on. A house, know the address and the street)
2. Season, month
3. Day of the week and time of day
4. Weather (and this may change during a scene; weather is not static. Even if the scene takes place in a room with no windows, people usually have a sense of the weather—and may be aware of it, through sounds, through how others look (umbrella dripping wet, snow boots)
5. How had weather affected setting? (severe heat wilting plants, or AC on—a stale closed up quality to the house)
6. Quality of light (this might change from beginning to the end of the scene). From where does the light in the scene come? What kind of light is it (overhead florescent lighting, a floor lamp, light from a computer screen)?
7. What does light glint on or reflect on in the room or setting?
8. Three sounds (not including actual dialogue) from inside and from outside.
9. Three smells
10. Texture (the physical feel of things that your character touches—smooth, dry, rough, wet, polished—and do let your character interact with setting—touching things, picking things up)
11. Temperature
12. Quality of the air in the place (thick, muggy)
13. Other people in the environment (these are the extras—in a beach scene, the extras might be other sunbathers, the lifeguard, a couple sitting one towel over. Typically, we don’t know the other people, but they are part of the environment.
14. Objects in the room: obviously a kitchen had a refrigerator, a stove. Listing such objects doesn’t do much.
    1. Describe instead a detail about one piece of furniture or object.
    2. Something flawed (a tablecloth with a faint stain, scratches in the dining room table, the nail on the wall where a picture must have hung)
    3. Something with words on it (a bumper sticker or license of the car ahead, a magnet on the refrigerator, a calendar)
    4. Something that doesn’t belong in the room (surfboard leaning against the bedroom wall) or something out of place (the wallet in the freezer)
15. Walls, floors, doors (typically not described unless there is a reason to or there is something out of the ordinary—the floors slope, the door gets stuck in humid weather).
16. View from place to other place—what can be seen from the setting your character inhabits?
17. Personal history of the place: Did anything significant happen to the character in this place? (Any evidence of history—could be a hole in the wall someone punched, penciled measurements of growth, stain in the carpet . . .)
18. Facts about the place
19. What is nearby but beyond view?
20. The neighborhood—Where is your character’s home in relation to other houses or structures on this street? Who lives next door? What is one detail about one of the neighbors?