

Sentence Variety

1. Varying Sentence Length

To promote interest and emphasis in your writing, sentence length should vary.

- **Simple Sentences**

These short sentences should be used sparingly; yet they can be remarkably effective. However, it should be remembered that strings of short sentences are tedious, choppy, and difficult to understand.

Example: The sun shone on the still lake.

- **Compound Sentences**

It is important to remember: all things in moderation. An unbroken string of compound sentences is dull and ponderous. When used carefully, creating a compound sentence (2 or more related sentences connected by **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**) is an effective way to provide sentence variety.

Example: The ducks swam on the surface, and below the carp scoured the lakebed.

- **Complex Sentences**

Complex sentences consist of one clause that can stand by itself (independent clause) and at least one clause that is incapable of doing so (dependent clause). Subordinate conjunctions such as: **because, when, although, while, if, and before** make the dependent clause incapable of standing alone and requiring the assistance of a clause capable of being independent. These sentences are particularly effective because they allow the reader to understand the connection between thoughts.

Example: Because he was unwell, a day at the lake was not an inviting prospect.

- **Compound/Complex Sentences**

As their name implies, compound/complex sentences are a combination of the two previously mentioned sentence types. They consist of 2 or more independent clauses (those capable of standing alone) and at least 1 dependent clause (a group of words incapable of standing alone). When used in moderation, these sentences can be extremely effective when trying to establish the relationship among several thoughts.

Example: He ran to the lake and the rest of the family followed (compound part) though no one was actually planning to catch many fish (complex part).

2. Varying Sentence Types

You can achieve sentence variety by mixing **declarative** (those sentences that make a statement), **imperative** (those sentences that command or request), **interrogative** (those sentences that ask a question), and **exclamatory** (those sentences that express surprise or strong emotions) sentences. You can also use **rhetorical questions** – those that are really not intended for your reader to answer. However, over – use of sentence types should be avoided because your writing may sound artificial, overly orchestrated, or insincere.

3. Varying Sentence Openings

You can achieve sentence variety by grammatically varying how you begin each sentence. Try beginning your sentences with these various grammatical components:

- **Adverbs**

Shortly, she will be leaving her position.

- **Infinitive Phrase**

To leave her position now, she would cause corporate chaos.

- **Participle or Participial Phrases**

Leaving her position, she assumes she will be soon employed elsewhere.

- **Prepositional Phrase**

In the near future, she will be employed elsewhere.

- **Adjectives**

Frustrated and bored, she decided to leave the company.

- **Adverb Clause**

When she became bored and frustrated, she elected to leave the company.

4. Varying Standard Word Order

You can vary the standard word order: **subject-verb-object (or complement)** by re – positioning these elements. However, this technique should be used sparingly. It cannot only be distracting to the reader, but it can appear contrived and awkward. It can also create a passive voice situation that dulls your writing.

Example – Normal Word Order

The alumni sent a petition to the university trustees.

Example – Varied Word Order

A petition was sent by the alumni to the university trustees.