



Sentence Variety

Sentence Length.

- Short sentences can be used to emphasize an idea. They are powerful.
- Longer sentences are best used to convey complex ideas. When an idea contains many interlocking parts, the relationship between the parts is better conveyed through the use of a longer sentence.

Varying Sentence Openings.

A sentence's opening can consist of various elements other than the subject.

- **Transitional expressions** can be used to show chronological order, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, place, etc. They include words like *first, next, finally, in addition*, etc. Phrases can also be used.

Example: On Friday morning she woke up early.

The phrase "On Friday morning" can go at the beginning of the sentence and set the time period for the action.

- **Prepositional Phrases** contains a preposition and the noun it connects to the rest of the sentence.

A preposition connects a noun or pronoun with the rest of the sentence; prepositions include words like *at, in, for, above, below*, etc.

Example: Instead of saying She wrote her paper at the computer, you could say At the computer, she wrote her paper.

- **Verbal Phrases** are made up of a verbal and a modifier, object, or complement.

A verbal is a verb form that functions as participle, an infinitive, or a gerund — in other words, a form of the verb which does not act like a verb.

Example: Instead of writing She came to the CWS because she wanted to perfect her paper, you could write, Wanting to perfect her paper, she came to the CWS.

- **Absolute Phrases** include a noun or pronoun and a participle. They modify the whole sentence instead of one word.

Example: Instead of writing She left the CWS happy because she finished her paper, you could write, Her paper written, she left the CWS happy.

- **Dependent Clauses** have a subject and a predicate but cannot stand on its own as sentence.

Example: Instead of writing I whistled a jaunty tune while I was waiting at the CWS, try writing While I was waiting at the Writing Center, I whistled a jaunty tune.



Sentence Variety continued

Varying Sentence Types.

- **Grammatical Types:**
 - Simple sentence example: *This sentence is an independent clause.*
 - Compound-complex sentence example: *This sentence is called a compound-complex sentence because of the number of clauses, and it is usually longer than a simple sentence.*
 - You typically want to include more complex ideas in sentences with more clauses. By varying the number of clauses, you can vary the sentence structure.
- **Functional Types:** There are four functional types — declarative (making a statement), interrogative (asking a question), exclamatory (expressing a strong feeling), and imperative (giving a command). Declarative sentences are most common, but the others can be used for variety. Sentence variety is fun! Isn't it? Say it is!

Rhetorical Types: You can vary whether the main idea appears at the beginning or the end of the sentence.

- Periodic sentences put the main idea at the end of the sentence.

This kind of sentence can be useful in adding suspense or shocking the reader.

Example- *He destroyed the world because he hated his sister and her little dog too.* You could rewrite the sentence this way: *Because he hated his sister and her little dog, he destroyed the world.*
- Cumulative sentences begin with an independent clause, then add details.

This construction puts the main idea first and supports it with phrases containing details. Cumulative sentences are useful when you want to get your main point out on paper, and then offer your support. Rather than attempting to create suspense or extra emphasis, your goal is clarity. Take for example, the sentence *He decided to destroy the world and gathered all the materials he would need: a plastic cup, a garden hose, a jelly bean, and a large quantity of fertilizer.* The main idea is that he is going to destroy the world, and that idea is the first thing in the sentence; the sentence also offers detail on what he will use to accomplish his task.