**Sentence Variety**

Too many sentences with the same structure and length can grow monotonous for readers. Varying sentence style and structure can reduce repetition and add emphasis. Varying the length, type, grammatical and rhetorical patterns of sentences are four ways to create variety and interest in your writing.

**How to add Sentence Variety**

**1. Use different sentence types**

A common way to create sentence variety is to use different sentence types. These include:

* **Declarative sentence.** Use it to make a statement of fact.
* **Interrogative sentence.** Use it to ask a question.
* **Imperative sentence.** Use it to command or order someone to do something.
* **Exclamatory sentence.** Use it to make a statement with emotion.

Sentences can also be simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex. Here is a brief explanation of each:

* **Simple sentence.** It has one independent clause.
* **Compound sentence.** It has two independent clauses
* **Complex sentence.** It is composed of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses.

#### 2. Vary the rhythm by alternating short and long sentences.

It is not necessary or even desirable to maintain a strict alternation of long and short statements. You need only an **occasional** brief sentence to change the pace of predominately long ones, or a long sentence now and then in a passage composed chiefly of short ones.

* Avoid the “**choppy**” style caused by using too many short sentences. Combine short sentences into longer sentences.
* Avoid “**stringy**” style which results from the overuse of *and* and so***.*** There are two ways to correct it.
1. Correct a stringy sentence by subordination of ideas
2. Correct a stringy sentence by dividing it into two sentences.

**3. Vary sentence pattern**

If too many sentences follow the same basic pattern (SVO) or start with the same word, especially *The*, *It*, *This*, or *I*, prose can grow tedious for readers, so changing opening words and phrases can be refreshing. Different beginnings can alter not only the *structure* but also the *emphasis* of the sentence.

* **Vary sentence beginnings using different parts of speech**
* Begin with adverbs
* Begin with adjectives
* Begin with prepositional phrases
* Begin with verbal phrases

* **Vary the rhythm by adding transitional words at the beginning of some sentences:**

*accordingly, after all, afterward, for example, for instance, in conclusion, in contrast, in fact, in the meantime, in the same way, indeed, just as..., on the contrary, on the other hand, on the whole, otherwise, regardless, shortly, similarly, specifically, still, that is...*

* **Vary modifier placement**
* Using Initial Modifiers (see above)
* Using Mid-Sentence Modifiers
* Using Terminal Modifiers:

**4. Vary rhetorical sentence patterns**

Another way to create sentence variety is by using rhetorical patterns. Three common rhetorical patterns are: periodic (or climatic), loose (or cumulative), and balanced sentences.

* **A loose sentence** puts the main idea before all supplementary information; in other words, it begins with a main clause that is followed by phrases and/or clauses that modify the main clause. These phrases or clauses add information to the main or independent clause.
* **A periodic sentence**: The main idea is expressed at or near the end of it, and it is not grammatically complete until the end is reached. The reader does not know what it is mainly about until he finishes reading it.
* **Balanced Sentence:** It is a sentence that is made up of two or more parts that are roughly equal in length, importance, and grammatical structure.

**SENTENCE VARIETY PRACTICE EXERCISES**

**Revise each sentence according to the instructions to practice in beginning sentences in a variety of ways.**

1. Travelling, eating, and shopping with credit cards seems wonderfully easy until you receive your bill at the end of the month. [Begin with a subordinate clause]
2. Some people are selfish and materialistic and are never happy with what they have. [Begin with a single- word adjective modifier]
3. Ken worked part-time at a gas station during his senior year in high school and managed to save a thousand dollars toward his college expenses. [Begin with a participle phrase]
4. This seems to be a highly technical book to the casual reader. [Begin with a prepositional phrase]

**Combine each sentence by using various means of subordination**

1. Engineers reported that tunnel would be more practical than a bridge. The city commission authorized the construction of a tunnel.
2. The students complained that they could not study in Miss. Baker's study hall. There was too much confusion. They did not realize that they were responsible for the confusion.
3. John Buchan was both versatile and talented. He wrote some very successful mystery stories. One of them was the Thirty nine steps. He was at one time Governor General of Canada.
4. Twenty five students attended reading classes during the first term. All improved not only reading but in spelling and vocabulary. Twenty raised their reading level two years.
5. Marilyn's illness lasted three months. She was confined to her home during this time. Nevertheless, she kept up in her studies. She graduated with her class.

**Revise each of the following items so that they are no longer choppy or stringy.**

1. Byrd's second expedition landed on Little America, and they proceeded to dig out the underground quarters left by the first expedition, but the buildings were twenty feet below the snow level, and so it took a lot of work to dig them out.
2. Alexandre Gustave Eiffel was a French engineer, and he designed the Eiffel Tower, and he designed the frame for the Statue of Liberty, but his greatest accomplishment may have been proving that metal was an important building material.
3. The ﬁre alarm bell rang, and everyone started to ﬁle out of school, but then our principal came down the hall, and he said the bell had been rung by mistake, and we went back to class.
4. The sun reflecting on the snow can cause blindness. The sun is bright. The snow is white. The blindness is temporary.
5. The air at that altitude makes oxygen masks necessary. The air is thin. The altitude is high. The oxygen masks are expensive.

**Revise the paragraph using the strategies for varying sentence beginnings. Make sure that no more than two sentences begin with the word *laughter.***

The Gift of Laughter

Laughter has many health benefits. Laughter stimulates the immune system. Laughter activates germ-killing T-cells and speeds up the manufacture of new immune cells. Laughter makes us feel good and have a better sense of well-being by pumping extra adrenaline into our bloodstream and bringing on a rush of endorphins, the body’s natural painkillers. Laughter greases the mental gears and stimulates creative thinking. Laughter exercises the heart, the lungs, and the muscles in our upper body and back. Most important, laughter reduces or eliminates stress. Laughing a hundred times a day may definitely keep the doctor away.

**Revise the paragraph so that short and long sentences alternate.**

Barcelona

Barcelona is a fascinating city. This city is home to Portuguese, Jewish, and Moroccan communities. These cultures give Barcelona an international air. The museums in Barcelona include the Picasso Museum and the Miró Foundation. In fact, the city has a very artistic feel to it. An important Spanish architect, Antonio audi, built many buildings in Barcelona. He is renowned for his bizarre imagination and modern designs. The city is also blessed with special treasures. There are bullfights, cable car rides across the harbor, and church services at the cathedral. Of special interest to Americans is the Plaza del Rey. Christopher Columbus announced his discovery of the New World there. Barcelona has a lot to offer.

**Each of these sentences begins with the subject. Revise each so that it has a different opening; then, identify your opening strategy.**



1. Momaday was taken as a very young child to Devil’s Tower, the geological formation in Wyoming that is called Tsoai (Bear Tree) in Kiowa, and there he was given the name Tsoai-talee (Bear Tree Boy).

2. The Kiowa myth of the origin of Tsoai is about a boy who playfully chases his seven sisters up a tree, which rises into the air as the boy is transformed into a bear.

3. The boy-bear becomes increasingly ferocious and claws the bark of the tree, which becomes a great rock with a flat top and deeply scored sides.

4. The sisters climb higher and higher to escape their brother’s wrath, and eventually they become the seven stars of the Big Dipper.

5. This story, from which Momaday received one of his names, appears in his works *The Way to Rainy Mountain, House Made of Dawn,* and *The Ancient Child*.

**The following five sentences use conventional word order. To vary this standard word order, revise each sentence in one of two ways: either invert the sentence, or insert words between the subject and the verb. After you have completed your revisions, link all the sentences together to create a paragraph.**

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1. The Dada movement first appeared in 1915 and effectively ended in 1925 with the rise of Surrealism.

2. The name *Dada,* French for “hobby horse,” was selected at random from a dictionary.

3. The Dadaists ultimately rejected all traditional cultural values, and their goal became to destroy art as an aesthetic cult and replace it with “antiart” and “nonart.”

4. The Dadaists rejected traditional art, and they substituted the nonsense poem, the ready-made object, and the collage.

5. The most notorious example of Dada art is the sculpture *Fountain* (1917), which Marcel Duchamp found and signed *R. Mutt* and then entered into a gallery exhibit.