



## SENTENCE VARIETY

If you repeatedly use the same sentence structure, you will bore your reader. Consider this paragraph.

*Short and choppy sentences are boring. They repeat the same structure. They usually start with a subject. The subject is followed by a verb. There are many ways to fix these sentences. These ways are easy to learn. They are easy to practice.*

Notice the sing-song rhythm in the above paragraph? If you recognize this pattern in your own writing, you need to work on sentence variety. Adding variety to your sentence structure makes your writing feel more less repetitive and more sophisticated.

### 1. Coordinate Sentences

Coordinate using the FANBOYS (**for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**) and/or conjunctive adverbs (**however, therefore, moreover, consequently, and nonetheless.**)

*Problem Sentences:* Herb wanted to travel to San Francisco. He didn't have the money for a flight.

*Example Revision:* Herb wanted to travel to San Francisco, but he didn't have the money for the flight.

*Example Revision:* Herb wanted to travel to San Francisco; however, he didn't have the money for the flight.

**You also might try: “both...and, either...or, neither...nor, whether...or, not only...but also”**

*Problem Sentences:* The women did not respond to the survey. They did not turn in their final recommendations.

*Example Revision:* Neither of the women responded to the survey nor did they turn in their final recommendations.

*Problem Sentences:* It is important to attend class. It is necessary to finish homework.

*Example Revision:* Not only is it important to attend class, but also it is necessary to finish homework.

### 2. Subordinate Clauses

Use subordinating conjunctions to subordinate (de-emphasize) one idea and emphasize another (**after, although, as, as if, because, before, even though, if, in order that, rather than, since, so that, that, though, unless, until, when, where, whether, while.**)

*Problem Sentences:* I was riding my bike on the toll path. I saw a huge snake.

*Example Revision:* When I was riding my bike on the toll path, I saw a huge snake.

*Problem Sentences:* The semester started early. We were out of school by June 1.

*Example Revision:* Since the semester started early, we were out of school by June 1.

### 3. Use Relative Clauses

If you use the same noun in two sentences, combine the sentences with a relative pronoun (**which, who, whom, that, whose**).

*Problem Sentences:* The movie star chose to wear black shoes. The shoes were from Brooks Brothers.

*Example:* The movie star chose to wear black shoes, which were from Brooks Brothers.

*Problem Sentences:* The book was named after my uncle Sebastian. He fought and died in Vietnam.

*Example:* The book was named after my uncle Sebastian, who fought and died in Vietnam.

#### **4. Use Participles**

Start a sentence with a verb ending in **-ed** or **-ing**. Eliminate a repeated subject or (“was,” “is,” “were”) by using the participle at the beginning or end of the sentence.

*Problem Sentences:* The bridesmaid was tired and upset. She left the reception alone.

*Example Revision:* Tired and upset, the bridesmaid left the reception alone.

*Problem Sentences:* The child was sleeping quietly. He held a teddy bear in his arms.

*Example Revision:* Sleeping quietly, the child held a teddy bear in his arms.

#### **5. Use Appositives**

An appositive modifies a noun or pronoun. Use an appositive to communicate information within one sentence.

*Problem Sentences:* Illinois Valley Community College offers students a service to help them write papers. This service is called The Writing Center.

*Example Revision:* Illinois Valley Community College offers students The Writing Center, a service to help them write papers.

*Problem Sentences:* Ms. Neely is the English instructor. She teaches mostly Shakespeare classes.

*Example Revision:* Ms. Neely, the English instructor, teaches mostly Shakespeare classes.

#### **6. Prepositional Phrases**

Use a prepositional phrase instead of writing a new sentence to provide information (**in, to, for, at, from, on, because of, in addition to, under, through, between**).

*Problem Sentences:* The concert is on Friday at 7:00 pm. The concert will take place in the auditorium theatre.

*Example Revision:* The concert on Friday at 7:00 pm will take place in the auditorium theatre.

*Problem Sentences:* Her class is offered in the afternoon. The class is in building B. It is on the second floor.

*Example Revision:* Her class is offered in the afternoon in building B on the second floor.

#### **7. Use Absolute Phrases**

An absolute phrase consists of a sentence’s subject and part of its predicate. Turn a sentence into an absolute phrase at the beginning or end of another sentence.

*Problem Sentences:* The princess’ hair was glistening in the sun. She picked up the prince and heaved him over her horse’s back.

*Example Revision:* Her hair glistening in the sun, the princess picked up the prince and heaved him over her horse’s back.

*Example Revision:* The princess picked up the prince and heaved him over her horse’s back, her hair glistening in the sun.