



Sentence Variations Foundation Lesson

Skill Focus

Levels of Thinking				
Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Create
Close Reading		Grammar		Composition
Literary Elements Diction connotation denotation vocabulary Theme Tone	Parts of Speech Phrases Infinitive Gerund (8) Participial (8) Prepositional Clauses Dependent/Subordinate Independent Sentences Structure antithetical (10) balanced (10) loose/cumulative (7) periodic (7) Sentence Variety Sentence Beginnings Syntax Techniques Antithesis (9) Omission (8) asyndeton (8) ellipsis (9) Parallelism (8) Polysyndeton (8) Repetition anadiplosis (10) anaphora (9) epanalepsis (10) Reversal (7) antimetabole (10) Rhetorical Question (10) Analysis of a Text Meaning and Effect related to parts of speech and phrases		Structural Elements Body use of commentary use of evidence Style/Voice Experimentation with Sentence Variety Imitation of Stylistic Models	

Lesson Introduction

Many student writers are unaware of the huge variety of sentence patterns available to them. One way to assist these writers in collecting a repertoire of sentence structures for use in their own writing is to have them use the sentences of professional writers as models for their own original sentences. The lesson that follows includes many different kinds of sentences for modeling.

Sentence modeling is also a great way to learn grammar. Choosing certain grammatical and syntactical elements for purposeful arrangement can provide many a teachable moment for mini-lessons in grammar, lessons that will stay with the students for much longer than drill and practice on a worksheet or in a grammar book might.

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Students may practice the sentence structures below in a variety of ways.

- Each day, alone, with a partner, or with the entire class, practice writing a sentence with a different sentence structure. Be sure to model your sentence exactly on the pattern of the original, but write about a different topic. Teachers may want to incorporate this activity into a daily journal writing assignment.
- Give background information on the grammatical structures (such as the different types of phrases) required in some of the sentence variations. Often, though, students can become familiar with the names of these structures just by practicing them in their own sentences.
- Once students have become familiar with the sentence structures and have practiced them, assign certain types of sentences to be included in a piece of writing.
- For fun, try writing a “Round Robin” story. The teacher gives a story starter and each person in the row writes a sentence in turn, using the different sentence structures modeled in the handout.
- As students become more familiar with grammar and syntax, they may make up their own sentence patterns.
- When revising essays, stories, or poems, individually or with a writing partner, have students rewrite some of the sentences in the original draft by using these models. This focus on sentence structure will help to develop plenty of interesting sentence variations in their writing.
- Post these sentence models around your classroom to give students ideas for ways to vary their sentence structure while they compose their writing pieces.



Sentence Variation Models

Begin with the subject.

Dad was a man with a mission that day.

Begin with an article and the subject.

The car was old and rusty, but my father was determined to get it running.

Begin with an adjective and the subject.

Little wrinkles of worry riddled my anxious forehead as I headed out the door.

Begin with an adverb before the subject.

Abruptly, it began to rain.

Begin with a prepositional phrase used as an adverb.

In the sky, clouds began to form.

Begin with a present participial phrase.

Coming down in buckets, the rain soon saturated the ground.

Begin with a past participial phrase.

Soaked with water, John sloshed through the mud.

Begin with an absolute phrase (or more than one).

His long journey ended, his weary feet aching, his bones icy with the cold, John entered the warm, cozy house.

Begin with an infinitive as the subject.

To relax with a cup of hot tea was Mary's only desire.

Begin with a gerund or gerund phrase as the subject.

Reading a good book is the best thing to do on a cold, rainy day.

Begin with an adverbial clause.

While the roast is cooking, my mother slices the tomatoes for the salad.

Postpone the subject.

There are in all this darkness a few rays of light.

Begin with a noun clause.

That his rocket would never get off the ground was an unbearable thought for the young scientist.

Begin with a verb.

Rise the sun did on that awful day.

Begin with a conjunction.

But how could this be?

Begin with the object of the verb.

That job, no one wanted.

Begin with an interjection.

Aha – I caught you red-handed.

Begin with a transitional word or phrase.

In fact, there were no oranges left.

Begin with a predicate adjective.

Fierce was the storm that night.

Begin with a subordinate clause.

Although the day was fair and cloudless, he took no pleasure in it.

Begin with two or more prepositional phrases.

In the castle of the monster with the hideous face, a beautiful princess languished.

Create a balanced sentence in which the phrases or clauses balance each other by virtue of their likeness of structure.

The monster lurked within the stony citadel; the monster screeched behind the castle walls.

Write a periodic sentence in which the sentence base (independent clause) comes last.

Surrounded by angry villagers, poked and prodded with sharp pitchforks, frightened by the sharp orders of the guards, weakened by hunger and thirst, the terrified monster cowered in the town square.

Write an antithetical sentence that contains two statements which are balanced, but opposite.

Great works of art show humankind at its greatest, not at its happiest; they illuminate moments of decision, not moments of ease.

Write a sentence in inverted order so that the predicate comes before the subject.

In the early winter comes the snow.



Write a sentence in which normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another (juxtaposed), thus creating an effect of surprise and wit.

The little children were skipping on the lawn: a field of butterflies was dancing in the wind.

Write a sentence ending with three parallel elements: words, phrases, or clauses that have the same structure.

He loved swimming, dancing, and running. (gerunds)

He loved to swim, to dance, and to run. (infinitives)

He loved the stentorian roar of the crowd, the tangy smell of the hot dogs, the sharp crack of the bat. (direct objects)

He loved baseball because it was slow, because it was rhythmic, because it was played on sunny summer days and misty rainy days and cold, wintery spring mornings. (adverb clauses and an adverb phrase with compound objects of the preposition)

Write a sentence in which repetition plays a role.

The slow summer days, the silent summer days, the secret summer days slipped by one by one.

Ask a rhetorical question.

Why should this be?

Write a sentence using anadiplosis, the repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the following clause.

The town fire chief, who was in charge of the Fourth of July celebration, was famous for his astonishing fireworks; these fireworks, richly colored and brilliant, burst repeatedly in the night sky like fiery rockets exploding in a rain of incandescent, glittering sparkles.

Write a sentence using anaphora, the repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses.

We will pursue him into the mountains; we will pursue him into the desert; we will pursue him down valleys and into canyons; we will pursue him to the ends of the earth.

Write a sentence using asyndeton, the deliberate omission of conjunctions in a series of related clauses.

I saw the mountain; I climbed the mountain; I conquered the mountain.

Write a sentence using antimetabole in which the arrangement of ideas in the second clause is a reversal of the first.

Am I a philosopher dreaming I'm a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming I'm a philosopher?

Write a sentence using ellipsis, the deliberate omission of a word or words are readily implied by the context.

The valley was cold because it seldom saw the sun; [it was] damp because [it was] surrounded by mist; [it was] silent, for no birds made their nests there or sang in the twilight.

My dreams had no end that night; my delight, [had] no limit.

Write a sentence using epanalepsis, the repetition at the end of a clause of the word, or a form of the word, that occurred at the beginning of the clause.

Dinner was over, but no one had dined; the argument had taken away everyone's appetite.

Write a sentence using polysyndeton, the deliberate use of many conjunctions for special emphasis – to highlight quantity or mass of detail, or to create a flowing, continuous sentence pattern.

The meal was amazing – my mother had cooked turkey and dressing and green peas and fruit salad and mashed potatoes smothered with gravy and toasty white rolls with honey and pumpkin pie and hot pecan pie swirled with whipped cream, and no matter how much we ate, the table seemed just as loaded as when we began eating.



Student Samples

Begin with an adjective and the subject.

Little white dots of static swam across the T.V. screen after I turned off the VCR.
(Amaan Mitha)

Dark footsteps leading to a trap door confused my brain as I tried to figure out what was happening. (Michael Rubin)

Tiny butterflies of nervousness filled my stomach as I stepped on to the field. (Brian Banks)

Begin with two or more prepositional phrases.

In the hole of the bunny with the generous heart, an empty fish bowl sat. (Avi Chavda)

Begin with an adverb before the subject.

Suddenly, a door slammed beyond the dark corner. (Michael Rubin)

Use epanalepsis.

The practice was over, but no one had practiced; the fight made the coach send everyone home. (Brian Banks)

Postpone the subject.

Through the impenetrable darkness shimmered the madman's glowing eyes. (Michael Rubin)

There in the glimmering ocean lay the undersea kingdom. (Tobin Fulton)

End a sentence with three parallel elements.

He enjoyed soccer because it was quick, because it never stopped, because it was unpredictable. (Brian Banks)

Begin a sentence with an adverbial clause.

While Trevor was looking for his personality, his mother prepared his lunch for school.
(Tyler Funk)

While the ball ripped through the net for the game winner, the other team ran into the locker room without a title. (Alex Johnson)

As George ran from the man eating clams, a giant scallop swallowed Fred. (Ned Wilson)

Unless Suzy goes to the national tiddley wink championship, I can't sneak a peek at her diary. (Brian Banks)

After Bob sky dives, he goes swimming with the sharks. (David Curran)

Begin with a noun clause as the subject of the sentence.

That Kelly would gain an extra pound and fail to fit into her tight jeans was a thought too painful for her to conceive. (Ben Grisz)

That Pinocchio would never be a real boy broke his wooden heart. (Michael Neinast)

That the purple gorilla would trample him was his uttermost fear. (Hamilton Wise)

Begin with an infinitive phrase.

To torture her students was the teacher's lifelong dream. (Noel Hollingsworth)

To chow down on a new box of crackerjacks was the only thing the boy wanted.
(Gavin Calaway)

Write a sentence using chiasmus.

The cops wondered if they were fighting crime, or if crime was fighting them. (Michael Rubin)

Begin with a past participial phrase.

Drenched in sweat, I crept down the hallway. (Jason Luckett)

Write a sentence in which repetition plays a role.

Those sad old ghosts, those silent old ghosts, those scary old ghosts disappeared one by one.
(Jason Luckett)

Begin with an absolute phrase.

My terrifying journey ended at last, I went through the dark, squeaky gate of the old mansion. (Jason Luckett)

His great speech over, he returned to his ruby-filled bedchamber. (Tobin Fulton)

Begin with a present participial phrase.

Filling their plates with squid, the people of the undersea kingdom ate fiercely. (Tobin Fulton)

Begin with a past participial phrase.

Clothed in golden garments, the merman king made an angry speech. (Tobin Fulton)

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