

Sentence Style and Variety

What happens when you listen to a speaker who never varies his tone or sentence length? You get bored. And what happens when speakers emphasize the wrong words? You get confused. When you revise, think about ways to vary the structure and length of your sentences so that you can properly emphasize key ideas and maintain your reader's interest. Since sentence variety helps to clarify relationships between ideas and maintain the reader's interest, consider using non-conventional ways to express your thoughts.

The conventional sentence in English is structured with the subject first and then the verb.

Example: Puppies are cute. [Puppies is the subject; are is the verb.]

This subject-first sentence structure is perfectly suitable, but if it's the only way you structure your sentences, you'll bore your readers and miss opportunities to emphasize more important ideas.

Since first and last words are the key places for emphasis in a sentence, think about your sentences with a different part of speech, especially verbs, adjectives, and prepositions.

- x If you want to emphasize action, place a form of the verb first.

Example: Chasing puppies is fun.

- x If you want to emphasize the nature of the action, begin with an adverb.

Example: Loudly barking dogs annoy me.

- x If you want to emphasize a descriptive element, put an adjective first.

Example: Fluffy puppies feel soft.

- x If you want to emphasize location or orientation, place a preposition first.

Example: Underneath the dog's collar you'll see a tick.

The parts of speech above will help you with variety of openings, and they'll also help you to combine for variety of length. There are many ways to combine these parts of speech.

3. Vary length and openings by combining sentences with a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.
4. Vary length and openings by combining sentences with a semicolon + conjunctive adverb + comma; consequently, ; however, ; instead, ; therefore,

Exercise A: Varying Sentence Openings

C. The creature was a reptile, yet I knew it would have scaly skin and be warm blooded.

6. The snake is likely dying. The reason may be that it has internal parasites or that you overfed it.

A. The snake is likely dying, and the reason may be that it has internal parasites or that you overfed it.

B. ~~The snake is likely dying, and the reason may be that it has internal parasites or that you overfed it.~~

C. ~~The snake is likely dying, and the reason may be that it has internal parasites or that you overfed it.~~

7. ndtc16 (y)-1 (20 (b2 (d)3 (e)ox-21(r)3 (e)da)4 (s)-1 (i20 (oug)ov)-h)-2 (a)-16 (y)3 (e) 0 -1.-2 (n k)3

10. Researchers don't know whether the great white shark was eaten by an enormous cannibal

4. You didn't show any gratitude. They think you're rude.

5. Rick began racing competitively five years ago. He has won several medals.

6. My mother cleans the dishes. I wipe the countertops.

7. We ate dinner. Then we had dessert.

8. You are funny and rich. I don't want to marry you.

9. My mother and father never saved a cent. They never had money for emergencies.

10. I love you very much. I don't love the way your breath smells at this moment.

Exercise DVariety via Conjunctive Adverbs:

Directions Combine the sentences by choosing a conjunctive adverb that correctly expresses the relationship between the two sentences.

Example: I didn't study very much or attend class. I failed.

Revised: I didn't study very much or attend class; consequently, I failed.

In these exercises, use only the following conjunctive adverbs: consequently, however, instead, therefore

1.

9. Most students buy their textbooks online. I buy them directly from the bookstore.

10. If you come too close, you may get burned. If you stay too far away, you may not be warmed by the heat.

Exercise D: Variety via Relative Pronouns

Directions Combine the sentences by using the relative pronoun requested in brackets. Feel free to modify the wording as needed in order to achieve sentence variety.

Example: The novel was interesting. I read it in one day. [Combine using ~~that~~ **which**]

Revised: The novel was so interesting that I read it in one day.

1. The store sells everything you need. It is not far from here. [Combine using **which**]

2. The writer didn't revise for grammar. He usually proofreads carefully. [Combine using ~~and~~ **who**]

3. Citi Field has a capacity of ~~forty~~ five thousand people. It opened in 2009. [Combine using **which**]

4. The man perished in a fire. His son is a fireman. [Combine using ~~and~~ **whose**]

5. Jennifer was exhausted and ill. She showed up anyway, and performed beautifully. [Combine using **who**]

6. Michael is a versatile musician. His mother was a talented guitarist. [Combine using whose]
7. I bought her a puppy. She is the woman I love. [Combine using who]
8. I can't find the book. You lent it to me yesterday. [Combine using that]
9. We waited more than an hour for the advisor. He was stuck in traffic on the Long Island Expressway. [Combine using who]
10. Last summer we vacationed in Nice. Nice is located in southern France on the Mediterranean Sea. [Combine using which]