Use Sentences of Different Lengths

1. Focus

Explain Using Sentences of Different Lengths

Say: What if I asked you to read an informational report about birds, and when you opened the book, this is what you read: “There are many kinds of birds. There are big birds. There are small birds.” Hmm. It all sounds sort of the same, doesn’t it? If several sentences in a row are about the same length, readers begin to lose interest. I would rather read sentences that have a little more variety. One way to add variety is to use sentences of different lengths, some longer and some shorter. Today I’m going to show you how to use different sentence lengths so that you can keep the reader’s interest in your informational report.

Model Using Sentences of Different Lengths

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for different sentence lengths as you read aloud the text.

Modeling Text

While making a batch of these cookies, Ruth realized she was missing an important ingredient. She replaced the unsweetened baker’s chocolate powder with a bar of Nestlé semi-sweet chocolate. Ruth cut up the chocolate into pieces. She put the pieces into the dough.

Say: The author does a terrific job of using different sentence lengths. The first sentence is long. It begins with an introductory phrase, “While making a batch of these cookies,” and then finishes the thought with “Ruth realized she was missing an important ingredient.” The next sentence is also pretty long, but simpler. But the next two sentences are very short. I like them because they remind me of a recipe—clear and to the point. Because the author uses sentences of different lengths, he keeps my interest in his subject.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Learn the importance of using sentences of different lengths.
• Practice using sentences of different lengths to make informational reports read smoothly.
• Discuss how they can apply this strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text and practice text onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.
2. Rehearse

Practice Writing Sentences of Different Lengths

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

We go to school. We learn new things. We sing songs. We read books. We play.

Ask students to work with a partner to revise the sentences into two or more sentences of different lengths. (For example: We go to school to learn new things. We sing songs and we read books. We play outside.) Each pair should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how varying sentence lengths increases sentence fluency.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their revised sentences and explain what they changed. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they draft or revise their informational reports.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that it’s important to use sentences of different lengths when we write. Using sentences of different lengths helps keep the readers’ interest, and it makes you a better writer. As you write your informational reports, remember to vary your sentence lengths.

Encourage students to look for opportunities to vary their sentence lengths as they draft or revise their informational reports during independent writing time. During student conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to read aloud a section in their informational reports that includes sentences that vary in length.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

While the rest of the class works on the partner practice activity, work one on one with beginning ELs to practice expressing complete sentences orally. Write sentences on chart paper and read them with students. For example:

I like cookies.
Ali likes recess.
Yoko is reading.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates: **informational/informativo(a); vary/viar**.