Use Sentences of Different Lengths

1. Focus

Explain Using Sentences of Different Lengths

**Say:** Listen to these sentences: “I got up. I ate breakfast. I came to school.” Now listen to these sentences: “This morning, after I got up, I ate breakfast. Then I came to school.” Which sentences are more interesting to you? Why? Allow responses.

**Say:** When I write a personal narrative, I want to keep the reader’s attention. One way to do that is to vary the sentence length, making some sentences longer and some shorter. When all of our sentences are the same length, they begin to sound the same and readers get bored. Today I’m going to show you how to vary the sentence lengths in your personal narratives so you can keep your readers’ interest.

Model Using Sentences of Different Lengths

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for sentences of different lengths as you read aloud the text from “The Day I Split My Chin.”

**I got my first two-wheel bike with hand brakes when I was seven. I was so thrilled. I wanted to use it right away. So I went for a ride in the park.**

Modeling Text

**Say:** In this paragraph, the author does a great job of using a variety of sentence lengths. The first sentence is longer. It describes the two-wheel bike with hand brakes. The next two sentences are short. I think the author made a good choice here. The sentence “I was so thrilled” gives power to her statement. And the sentence “I wanted to use it right away” helps us feel her excitement. The next sentence is a little longer. It has a nice flow to it, almost like a bike ride in the park.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn the importance of using sentences of different lengths.
- Practice using sentences of different lengths in a personal narrative.
- 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 Using Sentences of Different Lengths

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

I like to ride my bike. I ride my bike in the park. I ride with my friends.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to revise the sentences so that they vary in length. Encourage students to combine sentences or begin them with different words. Each pair should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how the different sentence lengths increase sentence fluency.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their sentences and explain their revisions. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they draft or revise their personal narratives.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that it can be boring to read too many similar sentences in a row, but we can use different sentence lengths to help keep readers interested in our writing. Remember to vary your sentence lengths as you draft and revise your personal narrative.

Encourage students to use a variety of sentence lengths 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 share examples of their independent writing. Point out examples of sentences of different lengths and discuss what makes the sentences effective.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

While other students complete the partner practice activity, work with beginning ELs to practice saying and writing complete sentences. Model saying a sentence about your day. Say: I woke up early. Use pantomime to help students understand the sentence’s meaning. Encourage ELs to orally compose a sentence about what they have done that day. Then help them write it on chart paper.

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: narrative/la narración, personal/personal.