Vary Sentence Structure by Combining Sentences

1. Focus

Explain Using Varied Sentence Structures

Say: When we write informational reports, we make sure to include interesting and varied sentences. One way to do this is to make sure that we have a variety of different types of sentences and sentence lengths. This makes the text read better. Listen to these two short, basic sentences: “It rains in the fall. The sweetgrass grows.” We can use the conjunction and to combine these two short sentences into one longer, more interesting one: “It rains in the fall, and the sweetgrass grows.” Other conjunctions we can use to combine sentences are but, so, and or. Today I’m going to show you how to increase sentence fluency in your writing by varying sentence structure using the conjunctions, or joining words, and, but, so, and or to combine sentences.

Model Varying Sentence Structure by Combining Sentences

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

| 1. It gets very cold, and a lot of snow falls. |
| 2. The caribou spend summer near the Arctic Circle, but in the fall the temperature drops. |
| 3. Gnus and zebras need to find water, so they travel long distances to find it. |
| 4. The animals could risk dangers by migrating, or they could risk running out of food if they do not migrate. |

Modeling Text

Ask students to listen for conjunctions as you read the modeling text.

After sentence 1. Say: I see that this sentence is made up of two shorter sentences that are combined by the conjunction and. The two parts of the sentence are separated by a comma that comes before the conjunction. Each part of the sentence has its own subject and verb, and each part can stand alone: “It gets very cold. A lot of snow falls.” Run your finger under each of the clauses as you read it aloud.

After sentence 2. Say: I see that this sentence is also made up of two shorter sentences. This time, the two shorter sentences are joined by the conjunction but. I see that there is a comma before the word but. I know that combining shorter sentences is one way I can vary my sentence structure when I’m writing.

Use sentences 3 and 4 to continue explaining how the conjunctions so and or are used to combine short sentences.
2. Rehearse

Practice Varying Sentence Structure by Combining Sentences

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

Grass grows where it rains. The animals follow the rain.
The caribou spend the winter in forests below the Arctic Circle.
Pregnant females will head north in June.
The eggs hatch quickly. The baby crabs grow in the sea.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to combine the sentences into longer sentences. They should think about which conjunction best joins each pair of sentences. (Explain that more than one conjunction might be used successfully.) Partners should write down their sentences. Remind them to use commas to separate the two parts of each sentence. Students should be prepared to read and explain their sentences to the class.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read their sentences aloud and explain how they combined sentences to vary the sentence structure. Ask students to decide if the best conjunction was used to combine the sentences. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they revise their own informational reports.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: Today we learned how to vary sentence structure and sentence length by combining sentences using the conjunctions and, but, so, and or. Remember to use conjunctions to vary your sentences when you write your informational reports.

Encourage students to think about varying the sentence structure as they draft or revise 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 examples of sentences in which they’ve used the conjunctions and, but, so, or or.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Help beginning ELs use the conjunction and to join two simple sentences. Model picking up a marker and writing on chart paper.
Say: I get my marker. I write. Write the two sentences on chart paper. Beneath them, write the sentences joined by the word and, and circle the conjunction. Write the sentence frame on chart paper: I get my ______, and I ______. Have students practice using the conjunction by doing two actions and describing them; for example: I get my book, and I read; I get my coat, and I put it on; and I get my pen, and I write.

Intermediate and Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers to complete the above activity. Supply the following sentence frames to help them discuss how to use conjunctions to join two shorter sentences:
The two parts of my sentence are ______ and ______.
I used the conjunction ______.
I used a comma ______.

All Levels
If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: variety/la variedad.