Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
- Learn about starting sentences with different words.
- Practice starting sentences with different words.
- 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.

1. Focus

Explain Starting Sentences with Different Words

Say: When I write an informational report, I try to make each sentence a little different. If every sentence sounds the same, readers will get bored, and they won’t want to read my report. One way to vary sentences is to start with different words. I don’t use a different word to start each sentence. I just try to not have many sentences in a row that start with the same word. For example, I wouldn’t want to write “He ate breakfast. He left the house. He walked to work.” Today I’m going to show you how to start sentences with different words so that you can keep the readers’ interest.

Model Starting Sentences with Different Words

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for sentences that start with different words as you read the text aloud.

Frank, now an adult, started a business. He sold seven flavors of his “frozen drink on a stick” on a beach in California. His children called them “Pop’s ‘sicles.” Frank loved that name!

Modeling Text

Say: This paragraph is a great example of how a writer uses different words to start sentences. The author uses the subject’s name, Frank, in the first sentence. This is a good idea because it tells us who the paragraph is about. But instead of using Frank again in the second sentence, the author uses he to start the sentence. The third sentence begins with his because it refers to Frank’s children (His children). Then the author begins the last sentence with Frank again. The author uses different words for Frank, but we never lose track of who he’s writing about. I’m going to underline these words and label them “start with different words.” Underline and label the identified words.
2. Rehearse

Practice Starting Sentences with Different Words

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

Zebras have stripes. Zebras live in Africa.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to revise the sentences so that they start with different words. Each pair should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how the different words increase sentence fluency.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their sentences and explain how they changed them. 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 learned that we can start sentences with different words to vary the sentences and to keep readers’ interest. Remember, readers aren’t going to want to read sentences that always begin with the same words. As you write and revise your informational reports, look for opportunities to start sentences with different words.

Encourage students to find ways to start their sentences with different words in their informational reports. 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 sentences they’ve written that start with different words.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

While other students work with partners, or during independent writing time, work with beginning ELs to orally generate complete sentences that begin with pronouns such as he, she, and I. Write the students’ sentences on chart paper and ask students to read them with you. For example:

I walk to school.
He rides the bus.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Share this sentence frame to help them finish the practice activity:

_______ live in Africa.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: different/diferente.