Vary Sentence Structure

1. Focus

Explain Using Varied Sentence Structures

Say: Remember when you were first learning to read? You read a lot of books that sounded like this: “Mud is fun. Mud is cool. Mud is oozy. Mud is messy.” Those sentences are great for teaching kids how to read. But they’re not so great for keeping a reader’s interest. One way authors make their writing interesting is to change the way their sentences look and sound. They do this by starting sentences with different words. Today I’ll show you how to write more interesting personal narratives by starting sentences with different words.

Model How Writers Vary Sentence Structure

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen as you read the passage aloud and to listen for ways the author varies sentence structure.

Modeling Text

I jumped into the air and felt something hit my glove. Then I hit the ground with a thud. Thump! I skidded. I rolled. My jersey was covered with dirt and grass. I was afraid to look in my glove. As I saw my other team members jump in excitement and run toward me, I looked into the glove and saw the ball!

Say: The first sentence describes two actions—jumping in the air and feeling something hit the glove. So this sentence is a combined sentence. The next sentence starts with the sequence word then. Adding sequence words is a simple way to vary sentence structure. Next the author uses two short, simple sentences in a row. Adding short sentences back to back is a great way to keep excitement going. It makes me wonder what is going to happen next. The next two sentences describe what the boy looked like and what he felt. Now look at the last sentence. It starts with the word as and then there is a comma after me. This is an example of a clause. It is not a complete sentence, but it does lead to a complete sentence. So we found four ways to vary sentence structure: combine sentences, use sequence words, use short, simple sentences back to back, and introduce a complete sentence with a clause.

Create a Class Varying Sentence Structure Anchor Chart

Say: Writers vary sentence structure in many ways. Let’s make an anchor chart so you can remember some ways and use them when you write your personal narrative.
On chart paper, work with students to brainstorm examples of the four ways to vary sentence structure. Begin with the examples you found in the modeling text. Post your chart for students to refer to throughout the unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Varying Sentence Structure</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Combine Sentences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Short Sentences Back to Back</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I jumped into the air and felt something hit my glove.</td>
<td>I skidded. I rolled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I jumped on the bed and hit my head.</td>
<td>She dashed. She twisted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use Sequence Words</strong></td>
<td><strong>Clauses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then</td>
<td>As I saw my other team members jump in excitement and run toward me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>next</td>
<td>Just when I thought everything was going my way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>later</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Sample Varying Sentence Structure Anchor Chart**

**2. Rehearse**

**Practice Varying Sentence Structure in Writing**

Write the practice text on chart paper or the whiteboard.

**Practice Text**

The park is my favorite place.

Ask students to work with a partner to add three sentences about the park. Each pair should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them and explain how they varied sentence structure.

**Share Practice Sentences**

Invite pairs to read aloud their sentences and explain how they varied sentence structure in their paragraphs.

**3. Independent Writing and Conferring**

**Say:** Remember, readers aren’t going to want to read sentences that begin with the same words. Vary the beginnings of sentences so that we don’t bore our readers.

Have students identify a section of their personal narrative to improve by varying the sentence structures. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

**4. Share**

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to read aloud examples of varied sentence structures in a section of their personal narratives.

**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning**
Focus on helping beginning ELs say and write complete sentences. Display a photograph using the interactive whiteboard resources. Encourage ELs to orally compose a complete sentence about the photograph and to write it on paper.

**Intermediate**
Using the photographs on the interactive whiteboard resources, encourage ELs to tell a partner two or more sentences about a photograph and to begin each sentence in a different way. Ask them to write down their sentences.

**Advanced**
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.