1. Focus

Explain Breaking Sentence Structure Rules

Say: When we write, we follow grammar and punctuation rules. These rules hold our sentences together and they help us communicate effectively. We must follow some of the rules all of the time. For example, we always need to begin a sentence with a capital letter and put end punctuation at the end of the sentence. If we didn’t always do this, readers wouldn’t know where one thought ended and the next began. However, some rules are not so rigid. For example, you may have learned that you are not supposed to begin a sentence with the word and or but. But, actually, sometimes it is all right to break these rules—as long as you don’t overdo it. Today I’m going to show you when it is acceptable to begin sentences with and or but.

Model Using And or But to Begin Sentences

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for sentences that begin with but or and.

Modeling Text

1. It would have been quicker and easier to simply ride up the ski lift. But I have long-lasting memories because my family and I hiked up Snow King together.
2. I could not believe the number of people coming and going in every direction. And they moved so fast!

After example 1. Say: In the first sentence, the author says that it would have been easier to ride than hike. By beginning the second sentence with but, the author emphasizes the positive things that came out of the hike. In a personal narrative, a writer can be flexible. Here the writer uses but to emphasize a point, but it also makes her voice sound personal and similar to the way she probably talks. A natural-sounding voice is important in a personal narrative.

After example 2. Say: In the second example, the author uses a sentence that begins with and. The writer uses and to emphasize his surprise at the movement of the people. Again, in a personal narrative, an author can phrase the text in a more natural-sounding way.
2. Rehearse

Practice Using And or But to Begin Sentences

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

I hiked faster to catch up with the others. When I reached the top, no one was there. All I could see was the view below.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to revise the sentences by using and or but to begin a sentence. Pairs should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how their changes improved the text.

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 sometimes it is acceptable to break the sentence structure rules about beginning a sentence with and or but. Starting a sentence with and or but can emphasize a point. But remember to use this technique sparingly, or your writing will sound choppy and sloppy.

Encourage students to keep this mini-lesson in mind as they draft their personal narratives. During student conferences, support students’ sentence structure and other elements of author’s craft using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite any students who have broken a sentence structure rule (by beginning a sentence with And or But) to share examples and explain why they chose to begin their sentences this way.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

While other students complete the partner practice activity, work with beginning ELs to practice saying and writing complete sentences using and. Say: I like the colors green and blue. Emphasize the word and to help students understand that it links ideas. Use gestures to ensure comprehension. Write the sentences on chart paper and read them aloud with students.

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.