Use Sentences of Different Lengths

1. Focus

Explain Using Sentences of Different Lengths

Say: It’s important to write clear, direct sentences in a procedural text. But, to keep my writing from becoming dull, I want to vary my sentences. One way to do this is by writing sentences that are different lengths, some shorter and some longer. If several sentences in a row are about the same length, readers begin to lose interest. And if readers lose interest, it’s hard for them to follow a procedural text. Today I’m going to show you how to use different sentence lengths so you can keep the reader’s interest in your procedural text.

Model Using Sentences of Different Lengths

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for different sentence lengths as you read aloud from “How to Draw a Sleepy Sun.”

Modeling Text

Say: The author does a good job of using different sentence lengths. The variety of sentence lengths helps make the text sound smooth when I read it aloud. The first sentence is short and to the point. The second sentence is even shorter. These directions are clear and direct. The third sentence is a little longer. It gives two commands in the same sentence: “grab your markers” and “color your scene.” The fourth sentence is the longest of all. It describes how to color the picture. Notice that in a procedural text, all the sentences do not have to be short. Longer sentences that are well written can still give clear directions.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Learn to vary sentence structure by using sentences of different lengths.
• Practice varying sentence structure by using sentences of different lengths in procedural text.
• 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.

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2. Rehearse

Practice Writing Sentences of Different Lengths

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

**Practice Text**

Put the butter in the bowl. Put the sugar in the bowl. Mix them together. They should be fluffy. Add the eggs.

Ask students to work with a partner to rewrite the text so it contains two or more sentences of different lengths. (For example: “Put the butter and sugar in the bowl. Mix them together until they’re fluffy. Add the eggs.”) Pairs should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how varying sentence lengths makes the text more clear and interesting.

**Share Practice Sentences**

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their revised sentences and explain what they changed. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they draft or revise their procedural texts.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We just learned that using sentences of different lengths makes your writing better. Varying sentence lengths helps keep the readers’ interest, and it can make the directions in your procedural text clearer. As you draft and revise your procedural text, remember to write some sentences that are short and some that are longer.

Encourage students to vary their sentence lengths in their procedural texts. 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 shorter and longer sentences from their procedural texts.

**Strategies to Support ELs**

**Beginning**

While the rest of the class works on the partner practice activity, work one on one with beginning ELs to practice writing and saying complete sentences about a very simple procedure. For example, say: Get out a book. Open the book. Model the procedure for students. Help students write the sentences and then reread them together. Invite students to act out the steps of the procedure.

**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: different/diferente; vary/viar.