Revise Your Biography for Sentence Structure

1. Focus

Explain Revising for Sentence Structure

**Say:** The next step after writing our drafts is revising them. One of the most important parts of writing is revising our drafts to make them better. Today we’re going to focus on revising sentences to make the writing clearer and more interesting to read. You can do this by varying the length of your sentences, starting sentences with different words, and by using independent or dependent clauses. All of these strategies will help you become a better writer and will help keep readers interested in your biography.

Model Revising for Sentence Structure

Display the modeling text (without revisions) on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Read each sentence aloud and model how you revise for sentence fluency.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn to revise a biography for sentence structure by varying sentence lengths, starting sentences with different words, and by using independent and dependent clauses.
- Revise sections of their own writing and share their revisions with the class.
- Discuss how they can apply these strategies to their own 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 (without revisions) and the practice text onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. Leave enough space between lines to allow you to insert new text.

Modeling Text

**Say:** This text begins with two short sentences. We can create a dependent clause and create a longer sentence by inserting the word *when* at the beginning of the sentence and using *he* instead of *Frederick*. This solves two problems: short, choppy sentences and sentences that begin with the same word. Make the changes on the modeling text.

**Say:** In the third sentence, we don’t need to say Frederick again. We can write *his mother*. Then we can start the next sentence with the word *she*, since we know we’re talking about Frederick’s mother. Make the changes on the modeling text.

**Say:** The ideas in these last two sentences really should be related to each other, but because of the way they are written, they don’t seem to be. It’s not just that Frederick’s mother could be whipped. It’s that she would be whipped if she wasn’t on time to work. We can make this a sentence with a dependent clause to show the relationship between these two ideas: “She knew that if she was not punctual for work, she would be whipped.”

Frederick When he awoke the next morning, Frederick was shivering with cold inside the burlap sack that he used as a blanket. Frederick’s His mother was gone. His mother She worked long hours on a distant plantation. She had to be punctual for work. She could be whipped. She knew that if she was not punctual for work, she would be whipped.
2. Rehearse

Practice Revising for Sentence Structure

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

1. He died in 1895.
2. He was a freeman.
3. He was one of the world’s greatest orators and statesmen.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with partners to revise the sentences using varied sentence structures and independent and dependent clauses. Each pair should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how their revisions improved each sentence.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their revised sentences and explain how they varied sentence lengths, used different words to start sentences, and used independent and dependent clauses. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they revise their biographies.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned how to vary our sentences when we revise our biographies. Remember that using sentences of different lengths and starting sentences with different words helps to keep readers interested in your writing. Using independent and dependent clauses can make your writing clearer. As you revise your biography, remember to watch for opportunities to vary your sentences.

Encourage students to focus on sentence structure when they revise their biographies during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite students to read aloud a section of their biographies that they revised for sentence structure.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Beginning ELs are not ready to work on this writing process skill. While other students collaborate on the small-group activity or write independently, meet one on one with students to support developmentally appropriate writing skills based on their independent writing and language levels. Since this lesson focuses on sentence structure, you may want to introduce combining two simple sentences using the word and.

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: biography/la biografía; different/diferente; variety/la variedad.