

NAME: _____

Judy Hopkins -- Sentence Variety

Keep in mind that you are trying to get your points, your message, and your story across to the reader. Every choice you make in terms of words, sentences, arrangement, punctuation, has an effect — good, bad, or mediocre — on the reader. Try to plan your choices for the best effect.

(Subjects are underlined; verbs are double underlined in the following examples)

1. **A simple sentence is one main clause = subject + verb.** A short sentence *makes a point* or *emphasizes a point*. A simple sentence is usually straightforward, but can be boring and choppy if that's the only style you use. A simple sentence can have phrases, adjectives, and adverbs, *but no subordinate clauses*.

In the morning, many students seem sleepy. He delivered the closing argument after a heated trial. The helicopter hovering over the roof frightened the dogs.

2. **A compound sentence has two main clauses joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so = FANBOYS is the acronym to remember for these coordinating conjunctions).** Use this style of sentence *when the main clauses on either side of the conjunction have the same emphasis* - they're "equal" in terms of importance. When you use "and," that means you are dealing with two coordinate items; when you join with "or," "but," or "yet," you're dealing with two contrasts equal in importance. **Do NOT link together clauses that are not equal in importance or if one clause describes an event that took place before the event in the other clause, or if one clause describes an event that occurred as a result of info in the other clause! Comma goes BEFORE the conjunction.**

I intend to study for my finals, and I also intend to work my regular hours as an intern. Sam was going to the party, but Samantha decided to stay home and study.

3. **A complex sentence has at least one dependent or subordinate clause, plus a main clause.** The more important information should *always* go in the main clause because the main clause always "carries" more emphasis than the subordinate clause. Remember, too, that subordinate clauses can come before, after, or inside of the main clause. Always put *less* important information in the dependent clause. When a subordinate clause comes before the main clause, always put a comma after the subordination clause. (NOTE: When a subordinate clause follows a main clause, do not put a comma between the clauses unless the information in the subordinate clause is non-essential and can be taken out; the exception to this are clauses that begin with the word "which.")

Because the man upstairs makes a lot of noise when he comes home at midnight, I have decided to move. We should always remember *that a mountain lion is a wild animal.* The man *who lives upstairs* makes a lot of noise *when he comes home from work at midnight.*

(NOTE: Subordinate clauses begin with words such as **after, although, as, because, before, even if, even though, if, since, so that, unless, until, when, whenever, whereas, while**, etc. Dependent clauses include clauses that may begin with **that, who, whom, whose, which, where, when, and why**.)

4. **Another stylistic option when you want the reader to "see" two sentences as being linked together in meaning is to use a semi-colon between them (but no conjunction).**

The student looks especially pale and tired; I don't think she's taking care of herself. Jennifer is a computer wizard; she can fix both PCs and Macs.

5. **Starting a sentence with a gerund (verb+ ing = noun) or an infinitive (to + verb infinitive) as subject gives your writing an instant pinch of variety.** Remember not to put a comma between the subject and the verb.

Raising children requires patience.

To get all "A's" is my goal.

6. You can add a conjunctive adverb between two main clauses to show emphasis, addition, contrast, etc. Notice the semi-colon goes before the adverb in the new sentence. A comma follows the adverb. Emphasis falls on the adverb and what immediately follows.

John Kerry believed he was going to win the election; *however*, he did not connect with the "red states."

Many students find grammar confusing; nevertheless, they are usually pleased when they have learned some basic rules.

7. **The cumulative (or loose) sentence** has its most important thought expressed in the main clause, coming at the beginning of the sentence, followed by modifying details that explain or elaborate on the main clause. The reader gets the main point right away, then "luxuriates" in the detail. Has a nice "flow."

Education has no equal in opening minds, instilling values, and creating opportunities.

Most of the Great American Desert is made up of bare rock, rugged cliffs, and mountains, separated from one another by broad basis covered with sun-baked mud and alkali.

8. **The periodic sentence** is one in which the main idea is NOT completed until near the end of the sentence. Its effect is to hold the reader's attention and focused until the end (and can also create suspense).

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With his long braids and wrinkled skin, his guitar as worn as the expression on his face, Willie Nelson is a true music maverick.

9. **Parallelism** occurs when two or more words, phrases, or clauses are joined together in a coordinate relationship using similar **grammatical** constructions. The effect adds emphasis, style, and often grace. You can make any grammatical unit parallel: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, phrases, clauses, and sentences, even paragraphs. Don't forget you can also use correlative conjunctions such as "either...or," "not only ... but also," "neither ... nor," etc.

The NBA players and fans threw punches, tossed drinks, and created chaos. (Verbs are parallel)

Every country, every industry, and every business will become increasingly competitive. (Nouns parallel)

Either my roommate or I will go to the meeting. (Correlative conjunction linking subjects.)

10. **The antithetical sentence** is a special type of parallelism in which contrasting ideas are juxtaposed in balanced or parallel structure.

He was a good student, but he did not like to study.

Students may not like to revise their papers, but the result is often a better grade.

Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

11. Use a **sentence with a colon** when you want the first part (must be a complete sentence) to set up the part AFTER the colon in order to list details, emphasize a thought (often one word or a few - doesn't have to be a complete sentence after the colon, but it can be), or set up a direct quotation.

Donald Trump's hair can be summed up in one word: awful.

I came to this conclusion: Medical science can only do so much. (Use a capital if you have complete sentence)

My grandmother could bake anything: cookies, cakes, and pies.