

Kenyon's Writing Center Shares Ideas on

Sentence Variety

Why is sentence variety important?

Sentence variety helps writers create an engaging work! In fact, there are a few types of sentences that you can use to make your writing varied and engaging instead of monotonous. If you leave yourself time to edit, you can create an amazing paper, a great creative piece, or a wonderful presentation using sentence variety.

What types of sentences can create variety?

There are *many* types of sentences you can use to create variety in your writing. Here are some of our favorites:

- The **semicolon sentence** links closely-related *independent clauses* using a semicolon. It's useful when you want to show ideas are closely connected.
 - *Independent clauses* are complete sentences which means they each have a *subject* and a *verb*.
 - An example of a **semicolon sentence**:
 - I write a lot of creative fiction; it is important to have strong character development.
 - *Subjects*: I and it
 - *Verbs*: write and is
- The **serial sentence** creates a list for readers, or a series of things (hence, **serial**). It's useful when you want to focus on a series of ideas concisely.
 - An example of a **serial sentence**:
 - When I edit, I think about my paper's flow, the topic sentences I've chosen, and using sentence variety to create a strong paper.
 - The list includes flow, sentences, and variety and, since these ideas are linked, you can use the **serial sentence**!
- The **speaking sentence** provides variety when using evidence. In particular, the **speaking sentence** is helpful when you're trying to create dialogue or incorporate quotations in a unique way.
 - An example of a **speaking sentence**:
 - "Serial sentences are one way of providing variety," the tutor explained, "but they are not the only way to do so!"
 - Here, we are able to provide a little context about who is doing the speaking before completing the sentence!
- The **subversive sentence** creates a place for a **parenthetical**—an idea usually placed in parentheses, commas, or em dashes, often in the middle of a sentence—in your sentence. These sentences are useful when you're including tangential or detailed information.
 - An example of a **subversive sentence**:
 - Sentences—even ones we don't want to write—can be more interesting if we use a **parenthetical**.
 - Here, we incorporate a **parenthetical**—even ones we don't want to write—and share an idea that is not of key importance but that still adds variety to our writing.
- Last, but certainly not least, is the **shifting sentence** which gives writers a means to move to a new idea in their work. These **shifting sentences** are great when you need to *transition* to a new point and generally include a *transition word or phrase* to indicate a shift in ideas.
 - An example of a **shifting sentence**:

- While sometimes we want to write quickly rather than well, spending time using sentence variety can allow for a more interesting paper.
 - The *transition word* “while” lets us know the writer’s perspective is about to shift.

Important concepts to keep in mind as you write with sentence variety:

- Focus on *consistent point of view or perspective*:
 - Make sure that your writing does not shift between first, second, and third person perspectives. Stick to first (me/ I/ mine | we/us/ our), second (you/ your/ yours), or third (she/ they/ he | hers/ theirs/ his) instead of combining all three.
- Write using *subject-verb agreement*:
 - Singular subjects need singular verbs, plural subjects need plural verbs.
 - Examples:
 - Plural: The sentences are clear.
 - Singular: This sentence is particularly concise.
- Stick with *clear verb tenses*:
 - Don’t mix your writing up between past, present, and future without clear transitions.
 - Example:
 - The dog was tired. She woke up suddenly, wagging her tail as her people got home. Once inside, they began to make dinner. It will be awhile before the dog sleeps again.
- Incorporate *inclusive language*:
 - Whenever possible as you write, use language that respects all genders, races, abilities, and other identities relevant to your work.
 - Example:
 - For a long time, medical insurance did not provide care for nonbinary individuals. Time has shifted this perspective, now making care for things like hormone therapy and plastic surgery more inclusive.

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Prof. Scanlon compiled this document; she updated it September 2022 to be more accessible. If you notice an error, need it in a different format, or have further questions or concerns, please email her at scanlon1@kenyon.edu or stop by and visit one of our tutors in Chalmers library!