

Name: _____ Date: _____

Vary Your Sentences

When every sentence in a paragraph is the same length, the reader gets bored. When every sentence in a paragraph starts with the same words, the reader gets bored. When every sentence in a paragraph has the same rhythm, the reader gets bored. When every sentence . . . well, you get the point. To add some pizzazz to your writing, you need to mix things up!

Here are four ways to add variety to your sentences:

Add an adverb to the beginning of a sentence.

Eli picked his clothes off the floor and threw them in the closet.

Hurriedly, Eli picked his clothes off the floor and threw them in the closet.

Link two sentences to form a compound sentence.

The water was freezing cold. Seth and Grace dove in anyway.

The water was freezing cold, but Seth and Grace dove in anyway.

Move a prepositional phrase to the beginning of a sentence.

Peter mixed the cake batter with a large wooden spoon.

With a large wooden spoon, Peter mixed the cake batter.

Combine two or more sentences.

Siberian tigers are the world's largest cats.
Siberian tigers are among the most-endangered species.

Siberian tigers, the world's largest cats, are among the most-endangered species.



Go to the next page to practice.

Directions: Rewrite the paragraph below so that the sentences vary in length, structure, and rhythm. Use the tips in the boxes on page 1 of this activity to help you.

I went camping last weekend. My brother came with me. He is three years older than I am. We brought a lot of stuff. We brought a tent. We brought sleeping bags. We brought hiking shoes. We brought snacks. We brought fishing poles. We hiked down to the lake and we tried to catch fish. Nothing was biting. We almost gave up. Then I caught a huge trout! That was a great dinner.

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Vary Your Words

When you encounter the same word over and over again in a paragraph, you start to lose interest, right? Using a variety of words spices up your writing.

Consider the following paragraph:

*I saw my brother Cal **running** down the street waving his arms. I **ran** after him, yelling, "Why are you **running**?" He called back, "I'm **running** after the Wilsons' dog. She stole my hat and **ran** away!" It must have been a great hat. I've never seen Cal **run** so fast!*

A form of the word *run* appears six times. Yikes!
Here are two things you can do to make the paragraph more interesting:

- 1 Look for places where you can be more specific.** For example, was Cal sprinting, speeding, or racing? Did the speaker rush or tear after him? Did the dog dart, bolt, or trot away?
- 2 Use a thesaurus to find synonyms for *run* that can be used instead.** Remember that the thesaurus provides words that have *similar* meanings, not necessarily the *same* meanings—so be sure to look up the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Here's an example of how the paragraph above could be improved:

*I saw my brother Cal **sprinting** down the street waving his arms. I **tore** after him, yelling, "Why are you **running**?" He called back, "I'm **running** after the Wilsons' dog! She stole my hat and **bolted**!" It must have been a great hat. I've never seen Cal **move** so fast!*

Directions: Read the paragraph below. Then rewrite it, looking for places where you can be more specific or substitute other words for any form of *great*.

I had a **great** time with my family on Saturday. My dad made us a **great** breakfast of blueberry pancakes. Then we all went to the park. The weather was **great**, and our dog, Robert, had a **great** time playing fetch. That afternoon, we went to see a movie. My mom didn't really like it, but I thought it was **great**! For supper, we ordered pizza from Famiglio's. Their pizza is **great**!