

Sentence Patterns – to help you improve your writing/ vary sentence structure

Vary Sentence Beginnings:

Sentence Pattern 1 - Begin with a Prepositional Phrase:

With a smile on his face, the lion devoured the boy.

Across the bay, the light flickered and went out.

Sentence Pattern 2 - Begin with a Participle or Participial Phrase (“ing” or “ed”)

Slithering down the trunk of the tree, I ripped my best pants.

You may also place the participial phrase after the subject noun.

Matt, hoping to escape the teacher’s attention, crawled into the classroom after the bell.

Past Participial Phrase (use an “ed” word):

Impressed by the ceremony, we left the room in silence.

You may also place the past participial phrase after the subject noun:

The student, depressed by the amount of homework, collapsed into floods of tears.

Sentence Pattern 3 – Dependent Clauses (begin with a subordinating conjunction) (These help express relationships such as compare/contrast or cause/effect.):

Though some critics have complained about her lack of personal warmth, Hillary Clinton is doing well in the presidential race.

The subordinating conjunction may also be placed in the middle of the sentence:

My pen ran out of ink **while** I was taking the test.

Exceptions: although, even though, though, unless

The teacher gave us additional work, although he did not offer extra credit.

Sentence Pattern 4 – Use the appositive (after subject noun or object noun)

Penicillin, a powerful drug, has won medical acceptance.

The property owner tactfully suggested that we get rid of **Susie**, our Siamese cat.

Sentence Pattern 5 - Infinitive Phrase: (“to plus verb”)

To cope with the new tax law, taxpayers must comprehend subtle variations in meaning.

To reduce expenses, the newspaper had to trim its editorial staff from twenty-one to twelve.

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Sentence Expanders: (these add more information to a sentence without forming a run-on sentence)

Sentence Pattern 6 – Parallel Structure: Repeat the same structure at either the beginning or end of a sentence.

Burdened with debt, harassed by creditors, and hampered by failing health, Charles Smith had no choice but to file for bankruptcy.

The student expressed gratitude to his teachers, to his parents, and to the school system.

Note: The student expressed gratitude to his teacher and to his parents. (No comma)

Sentence Pattern 7 – Compound Sentence (Two simple sentences joined by a conjunction (FANBOYS))

Peg braised the turkey, **and** Ethel made the stuffing.

He was a strange young man, **but** he seemed to have many friends.

One must humor her, **or** she will have a tantrum.

The woman fell almost fifty feet, **yet** she did not incur a serious injury.

Sentence Pattern 8 - Adverbs: (Show relationships) Place a comma after the adverb or adverb phrase.

1. In contrast, On the contrary, However, Nevertheless: what follows will contrast or oppose the previous statement
We enjoyed our trip to Mongolia. **However**, we will probably never visit this country again.
During our brief vacation, we are determined to visit Germany. **Nevertheless**, we will make time to visit Paris on the way.
2. Similarly, Likewise, In addition, Furthermore: what follows agrees with or adds more information about previous statements
Edgar Allan Poe’s work, filled with dark images, thrilled his readers. **Furthermore**, his work captured the imagination of the country.
3. As a result, Consequently, Therefore: reveal the “effect” in a cause/effect relationship
As a result, Poe’s works are still valued and read today.
4. Other adverbial beginnings: In comparison, Fortunately, Finally, Surprisingly, Shockingly,
Surprisingly, the air bag did not deploy during the accident.

Sentence Pattern 9 –Restrictive and Non-restrictive Clauses

Larry, whose escapades had made headlines, decided to stay in hiding for a while. (Restrictive)

Millie, who worked out every day for three hours before school, finally made the Olympic hockey team. (R)

The band concert, which began at eight o’clock, did not end until eleven thirty.

Mary would soon find out about the Nationalist Party, which ruled China at that time.

The man who stole the horse will hang. (No comma)