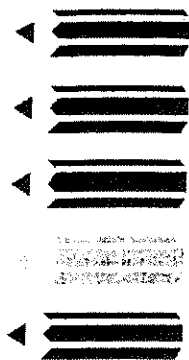


Six Trait Writing Warm-Ups



Trait #5: Sentence Fluency

Preparation

Exercise

Follow-up

1.	A selection from a basal pre primer and a selection from a good anthology	Read each aloud. Ask which is more enjoyable to listen to. Ask why. (direct discussion toward choppy vs. smooth)	Point out how adding some longer sentences makes the selection read smoother
2.	A few limericks	Read the limericks aloud. Ask what makes them fun to listen to and read.	Talk about how writing can "flow" easily.
3.	A few nursery rhymes (display on overhead or have copies for each child)	Read the rhymes chorally. Ask what makes them easy to read aloud together. Emphasize the flow	Talk about how words can fit together in an easy way.
4.	Display a selection (from your collection) full of sentence fragments.	Ask students what's wrong with the selection. Then ask them to help ;you rewrite the selection making complete sentences. Read it aloud and have the children compare the way it sounded before and after.	Talk about importance of sentence structure.
5.	Display a selection full of short (3 and 4 word) sentence; i.e., We came home. We ate cookies. We played games...etc.	Write on the board: " After school, we rode our bikes home and shared a plate of homemade chocolate chip cookies. Then we decided to play a quick game of Chinese Checkers followed by our favorite, Monopoly." Ask students which sounds better and why..	Talk about ways to make sentences flow better.

6.	Display a sentence with too many adjectives and/or too long a listing of objects.	Ask students to help you rewrite the sentence as two or three more manageable sentences. See if these read more easily.	Point out the need not to cram too much into one sentence.
7.	Display an example of good sentence fluency (from your collection).	Have children count the words in each sentence. Ask them what they notice about the sentence lengths.	Talk about the need to vary sentence lengths.
8.	Display an example of poor sentence fluency (from your collection).	Ask children to help you rewrite it, varying sentence lengths. See if that improves it.	Point out how varying sentence lengths can improve writing.
9.	Display a selection (from your collection) in which many of the sentences begin in the same way.	Ask students what they notice. Ask them how it could be improved. Ask them to help you rewrite it. Compare how the two versions sound when read aloud.	Point out the need for variety in sentence beginnings.
10.	Display a selection (from your collection) of an "endless sentence." (and, and, and...)	Ask students what's wrong with it and then ask for suggestions as to how to break it up into manageable sentences. Ask why it's important in good writing not to go on and on and on.	Emphasize that longer is not always better.

Sentence Fluency

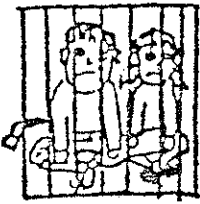
1. Look at descriptors for sentence fluency, focusing on “Sounds Good Out Loud.”
2. Introduce the book *Gauchada*.
 - A. Pre-teach vocabulary
 1. Gaucho: A South American Cowboy
 2. Pampas: flat fertile plains where cows are herded in Argentina, like the open range of the American West
 3. Ombu: A type of tree
 4. Maté: A strong tea that gauchos drink
 5. Bombilla: A hollowed out gourd in which the Gaucho carries his tea, like a canteen
 6. Quebrada: A wide valley
 7. Zamba: A dance the gauchos like to do
 - B. Explain the plot.
 - C. Explain the sound.
 - D. Read the story
3. Look at the descriptors again.
 - A. A variety of sentence
 1. lengths
 2. types
 3. openings
4. Super Sentences activity
 - A. As a class:
 1. “The woman walked.”
 2. List questions.
 3. Answer questions and expand the sentences
 4. Break the sentence in half to make it sound good.
 - B. In groups:
 1. List questions about short sentences on index cards
 2. Answer questions and expand sentences.
 3. Break sentences in half to sound good.
5. Discuss the purposes of:
 - A. Short sentences
 - B. Long sentences.

Light and Cheery

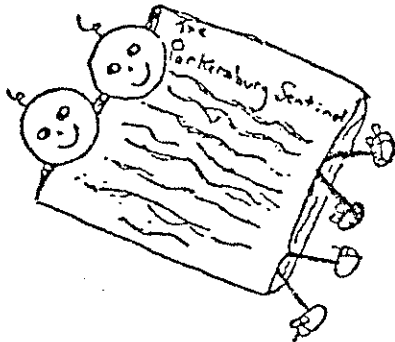
To help students to recognize faulty sentence construction, I collect examples of misleading sentences from student stories (or invent appropriate examples) and ask students to discuss and then illustrate the examples. The results speak for themselves.

Shirley Ott, Parkersburg, West Virginia

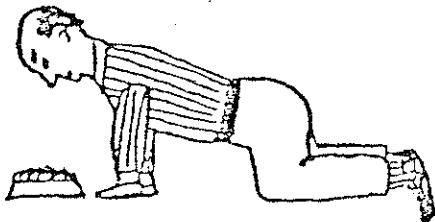
Dog Pound



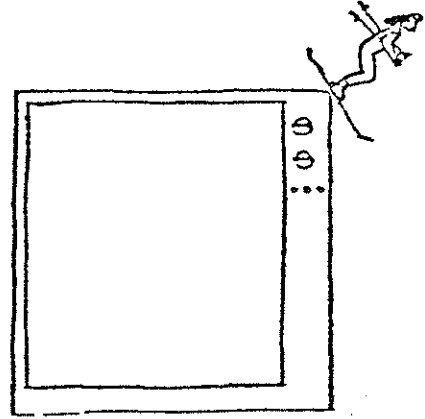
In a tiny cage at the dogpound we felt very sorry for the little bulldog.



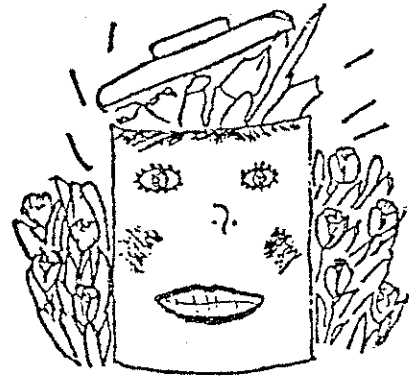
I read about the kidnappers who were captured in this morning's paper.



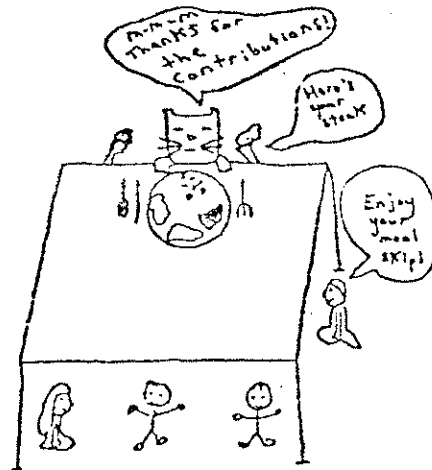
While eating his dogfood, Dad noticed that Spot seemed hungry.



I saw her make a thrilling slalom run on my cousin's TV.



There was a rose bush behind the pile of trash which was very beautiful.



Skipper enjoyed the chunks of steak slipped to him by the guests under the table.

Roll in Your Soup

Select the letter of the sentence that answers the question the way an English teacher would answer it.

1. a. I lied in the hammock all afternoon.
b. I lay in the hammock all afternoon.
Which form of evasion required more energy?
2. a. Leaving the drugstore, one twin brought Toni home.
b. Leaving the drugstore, one twin took Toni home.
Which twin has the Toni?
3. a. It's darned good.
b. It's darned well.
Which sentence has a sock in it?
4. a. The dog smells bad.
b. The dog smells badly.
Which dog is definitely not a bloodhound?
5. a. My husband likes golf better than I.
b. My husband likes golf better than me.
Which might lead to divorce?
6. a. After studying several books on English usage, he made fewer serious mistakes.
b. After studying several books on English usage, he made less serious mistakes.
Which shows greater improvement in *quality*?
7. a. A large glass of brandy may affect his recovery.
b. A large glass of brandy may effect his recovery.
Which did the doctor suggest?



8. a. At the table there were two people beside me.
b. At the table there were two people besides me.
At which table were there only three people?
9. a. A clever dog knows it's master.
b. A clever dog knows its master.
In which case does the dog have the upper paw?
10. a. Ohio must still play Iowa, which tied Purdue, and Michigan.
b. Ohio must still play Iowa, which tied Purdue and Michigan.
In which case does Ohio have only one game left to play?
11. a. The butler stood by the door and called the guests names.
b. The butler stood by the door and called the guests' names.
Which may result in some of the guests leaving?
12. a. Do not break your bread or roll in your soup.
b. Do not break your bread, or roll in your soup.
Both show bad manners, but which is harder to do?
13. a. Everyone I know has a secret desire.
b. Everyone, I know, has a secret desire.
In which one has the writer pried into the private lives of his friends?



Sentence Combining

Write the answers to these problems in paragraph form. Remember that an asterisk (*) signals the start of a new paragraph. Notice that problems 1 and 5 are really not problems at all. Just copy these short sentences as they are. Notice what an interesting contrast these staccato sentences provide for the longer sentences around them. As you work the problems, don't repeat nouns unnecessarily. Substitute pronouns any time you can without losing meaning.

1. Jake the Snake loves his work.
2. Three nights a week Jake the Snake crouches in front of a hockey goal.
Jake the Snake is loose and agile on blades. (,)
The blades are skinny.
The blades are steel.
Jake the Snake peers down the ice through the eye-slits. (, -ing)
The eye-slits are of a mask.
The mask is plastic.
3. He seems to say SOMETHING.
"I am Jacques Plante." (,)
"I am the greatest goalie in the business." (,)
I dare you to get one past me." (, and)
- *4. They try. (And of course)
They burst through Plante's teammates. (, -ing)
They are a swirl of color. (,)
They are a swirl of flying ice. (and)
They roar down toward the goal. (, - ing)
Thousands scream. (-ing)
The stick cracks against a frozen rubber disk. (as)
The disk gets smaller and harder. (that)
The disk hurtles at one hundred miles an hour toward Jacques Plante's throat. (as)
- *5. Slap.
- *6. Time stands still.
Thousands catch their breaths. (, and)
Plante's glove flicks out. (as)
Plante's glove is big.
Plante's glove kills the puck in its leather folds. (and)

7. Plante sinks to his knees.
Plante draws out the bit. (, -ing)
The bit is last.
The bit is of emotional suspense.
8. The breaths explode in a whoosh. (then, as)
He disdainfully flips the puck away. (,)
He watches the scramble start again. (and)
The scramble is mad.

Sentence Combining

Combine the groups of base sentences into more complex sentences.

1. Edith Wharton was born Edith Newbold Jones.
2. Edith Wharton was born on January 24, 1862.
3. Edith Wharton was born in New York City.

1. _____

1. From the beginning of her life she was immersed in a society.
2. The society was noted for its manners.
3. The society was noted for its snobbishness.
4. The society was noted for its cultural emptiness.

2. _____

1. Edith reacted.
2. Her reactions were against society.
3. Her reactions were in many of her novels.
4. Her novels portrayed society's weaknesses.

3. _____

1. Edith did not attend school.
2. Edith received a good education.
3. Her education came through efforts.
4. The efforts were of tutors and governesses.

4. _____

1. Edith married Edward Wharton.
2. Edith married in April of 1885.
3. Edith married when she was twenty-three.
4. Edward Wharton was of Boston.

5. _____

1. Edith had a nervous breakdown.
2. The breakdown was mild.
3. The breakdown came after the publishing of her first book.
4. Her first book was *The Decoration of Houses*.

6. _____

1. The first years of marriage were happy.
2. Events began to cloud their marriage.
3. The marriage lasted twenty-eight years.
4. Edward and Edith were divorced in 1913.

7. _____

1. Edith's first significant novel was *The Valley of Decision*.
2. The novel was set in eighteenth-century Italy.
3. The novel's characters seemed to be puppets.
4. The puppets moved in jerks.
5. The jerks were at every tug of the string.

8. _____

1. Mrs. Wharton died in 1937.
2. Mrs. Wharton died from an apoplectic stroke.
3. Her death interrupted her work.
4. Her work was on her last book.
5. Her last book was *The Buccaneers*.

9. _____

Sentence Fluency Activities

Simple to More Complex Sentence Form

To help students move from simple sentence form (subject-verb-subject or subject-verb-object) to a more complex sentence form, create a writing exercise starting with one simple sentence. With the class, select a topic that everyone will use. If, for example, the topic chosen is playground games, have each student write the basic subject-ver-subject sentence. Each student creates a final descriptive sentence adding only one descriptive word or phrase each time the sentence is written.

Example:

Sue played ball.

Sue played volleyball.

Sue played volleyball at noon.

Sue, dressed in a red blouse and jeans, played volleyball at noon.

Sue, dressed in a red blouse and jeans, played volleyball at noon with her best friend, Jane.

An extended activity:

Cut the writing page to fit on a piece of drawing paper and illustrate the sentence. Make a bulletin board display with the pictures and descriptive sentences or bind the class papers together in book form to be shared as a class big book.

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud helps student writers to sense the flow of language and the smoothness of the text. Have students practice reading aloud various pieces of literature. Work with writers so that they can begin to feel the rhythm of the literature. Point out that much of this rhythm happens due to the variety of sentence length and the variety of sentence beginnings.

Select book buddies and have them read aloud to each other. Select writing that is fluently written such as books by William Steig and Bill Martin, Jr./John Archembault

Scrambled Sentences

Give students a group of scrambled sentences that would normally be a coherent paragraph when unscrambled. Ask students to rearrange sentences, making the best arrangement possible. Discuss these possible arrangements. Have students choose a paragraph or two from their writing to see if their sentence arrangement is most effective.

Hear the Difference

Use literature that intersperses facts with a fictional running text. Have students form inner and outer circles with fact readers in one circle and running text readers in the other. Have the readers decide how they will insert the facts in the reading. Read the facts and running text using the agreed upon pattern. Listen for the difference in sound as you read. The facts are read for a different purpose than the running text.

Super Sentence Activity

Begin with a three word sentence. Ask a question. Add the answer to the sentence. Ask another question. Add the answer. Repeat until you have a very complex sentence. Then discuss how you decide when a sentence is too long. (If you don't have enough breath to read the entire sentence, that might be a clue.)

Tom played ball.

What kind of ball?

Tom played baseball.

Where did he play?

Tom played baseball in the park.

When did he play baseball?

Tom played baseball in the park on Sunday.

Sentence Combining Activity

Give students some kernel sentences (you have developed from a complex sentence passage). Have them combine the sentences into a complex sentence. Compare their sentences with the original passage.

Reverse the process by having students create kernel sentences from a complex sentence.

Listening to the Music of the Words

Fluency—listening with the ear for rhythm and flow of the language. Good writers know how to create just the right cadence to help underscore the meaning of the piece. Read excerpts from good quality literature to hear the music of the words. Describe the technique(s) the author uses to create sentence fluency.

101 Uses for a Dead Cat

Each student receives a picture from the book 101 Uses for a Dead Cat. There is a number in the upper right-hand corner. Put the number on the first line of the record sheet you have been given. Write a sentence about that picture. Your sentence may describe what's happening in the picture, or you may imagine that you are in the picture. Be creative. When the teacher says "pass" you will pass the picture you have to another student. Put the number of the next picture you receive on the line below your first sentence and write a sentence there about that picture. When you hear "pass" once again pass the picture and write another sentence. No two sentences may begin with the same word, since the object of this lesson is to achieve variety in the sentences that you write.

Fluency Chart

Provide students with various speeches and/or texts. Provide a record sheet chart on which they can record the length of individual sentences within the selection. Discuss the varying lengths and their relationship to the premise that long sentences are used to describe and short sentences are used to make a point.

This activity can be extended to record varied sentence beginnings and appropriate connectives for individual analysis.

Ghost Dance by Alice McLerran

1. Read the book
2. Students jot down any key words or phrases that just sound good to them as they listen.
3. Share the selections the students recorded. Talk about what makes something pleasing to the ear. Is it rhythm? Is it cadence? What is fluency, anyway?
4. Divide the class into groups. Pass out a typed card with a section of the text from this picture book. Ask students to examine it carefully. How do the sentences begin? Is there good variety in sentence patterns? What about length? Do they think this piece is fluent?

Additional activity: Choral Reading

How does this activity connect to the trait of sentence fluency?

- Hearing beautiful language used well to develop an ear for fluency.
- Examining sentences, phrases, and individual words as they connect.
- Discussing techniques that writers use to make their work sound good.

Hunt for Longest and Shortest Sentences

Give students a stack of books—texts as well as novels, and comb through them for the longest sentence they can find. Once small groups have found some, read them aloud. Whose sentence is long, but still makes sense? Whose doesn't? Now do the same thing with the shortest sentence. Chances are, someone will come up with the idea that one word is sometimes used as a complete sentence. What do you think—is it or isn't it? This is a good time to discuss the basics of what sentences are and aren't and how fragments and other devices are used for stylistic effect.