

Achieving Sentence Variety

UWF Writing Lab

The Effective Sentence

A. Variety and Emphasis

For interest and emphasis, there are various techniques to achieve variety in the pattern and length of sentences. No one of them should be overused.

1. Invert the normal order of subject and verb
 - a. From Ward C could be heard the sobbing of several crying children.
 - b. Into my mind came the reminder, "High school, no more--carefree days, no longer."
2. Start with an adverb or adverbial phrase.

Unquestionably, Shakespeare is superior to the other Elizabethan dramatists.
3. Place adjectives and participles after the words they modify.

Professor Wiseman, bemused and preoccupied, answered the question with a single scornful word.
4. Start with a clause.

Where there is cooperation lacking, there is always despair.
5. Make a clause into an appositive.

Our summer counselor, a graduate of an Eastern finishing school, frowned on our wearing shorts at dinner.
6. Begin with an adverbial conjunction.

However, the last electoral district was not to be hurried into reporting.

B. Errors to Avoid

The most basic errors in sentences derive from sentence fragments, from faulty connections between independent clauses (fused or spliced), and from changes in the forms of words (agreement).

1. Fragment - a part of a sentence written and punctuated as if it were a complete sentence. It may be a dependent clause, a phrase, or any other word group which violates the subject-verb pattern.
2. Comma splice - use of a comma without a coordinating conjunction which suggests failure to recognize the line between independent clauses.
3. Fused - failure to have either punctuation or coordination between independent clauses. With no separation the clauses blur into each other.

Comma splices and fused sentences may be corrected in four principal ways:

- a. Use a period and write two sentences.
- b. Use a semicolon.
- c. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction.
- d. Make one of the clauses dependent.