

Boost Free Lessons - Year 8 English

Lesson 2: Sentence Variety for Effect

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Worked Example 1

Explain the effect of the sentence lengths below.

She checked the lock, checked the window, checked the lock again, and told herself she was being ridiculous. Then the light went out.

1. Look at the lengths first. The opening sentence is long and the second is very short.
2. The long sentence piles up clauses, which mirrors her repeated, anxious checking.
3. The short sentence lands abruptly after it, which mimics the suddenness of the event.
4. The contrast is what creates the effect, so always compare the sentences rather than describing one alone.

The long opening sentence mirrors her repetitive anxiety, and the short second sentence lands abruptly, making the interruption feel sudden.

Worked Example 2

Rewrite the passage below with more sentence variety.

The bus was late. We waited in the rain. Nobody spoke. My bag was soaked.

1. Four short sentences of the same length sound flat and monotonous.
2. Combine two of them to create a longer sentence, which changes the rhythm.
3. Keep one short sentence for emphasis, and place it where you want impact.
4. Vary the openings too, so that not every sentence begins with the subject.

Model: The bus was late, so we waited in the rain with our bags going soft and heavy. Nobody spoke.

Remember: Vary sentence **length** and **opening**. Long sentences carry detail and build; short sentences land with impact. The effect always comes from the **contrast** between them.



Question 1: Rewrite each sentence as instructed.

1. Rewrite as one compound sentence: *It rained. We stayed inside.*

2. Rewrite as one complex sentence: *The alarm rang. Nobody moved.*

3. Rewrite starting with a verb: *She ran down the hallway shouting.*

4. Rewrite as two sentences: *He opened the box and it was empty and he sat down.*

5. Add a very short sentence after: *The road curved on through the dark for another hour.*

6. Rewrite starting with a preposition: *A single light burned above the door.*



Question 2: Read the passage below, then answer the questions.

*The road narrowed and the trees closed in overhead until the sky was only a strip of grey.
Then the engine coughed. It died. Nothing.*

1. Count the sentences in the passage and note their lengths.

2. What effect do the three short sentences create?

3. Why is the longest sentence placed where it is?

4. Rewrite the passage using sentences of similar length. What is lost?

5. Which sentence has the most impact? Explain why.



Question 3: Answer the following questions.

1. Write three sentences describing a race, using varied lengths.

2. Explain how a very short sentence gains its impact.

3. Why might a writer use several short sentences in a row?

4. Why should a writer vary sentence openings as well as lengths?





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Answers and Model Responses: Sentence Variety for Effect**Question 1**

1. Model: It rained, so we stayed inside.
2. Model: Although the alarm rang, nobody moved.
3. Model: Shouting, she ran down the hallway.
4. Model: He opened the box. It was empty, so he sat down.
5. Model: The road curved on through the dark for another hour. Then it stopped.
6. Model: Above the door, a single light burned.

Question 2

1. Four sentences: long, short, short, short.
2. They speed the passage up and create urgency, mirroring how quickly events happen.
3. It comes first to set the scene calmly, so the short sentences that follow feel like a sudden change of pace.
4. Model: The road narrowed and the trees closed in overhead, and then the engine coughed and died in the dark. The rewrite loses all urgency, because nothing stands out.
5. Model: *Nothing*. A single word after longer sentences creates a pause, and the emptiness of the word matches the emptiness described.

Question 3

1. Model response: The gun went off. For the first two hundred metres nobody moved ahead, and the pack stayed so tight that elbows knocked. Then Priya went.
2. It gains impact from contrast. After longer sentences a short one arrives abruptly, which forces the reader to slow down and notice it.
3. Several short sentences in a row speed the pace up, which suits action, panic or urgency.
4. If every sentence begins with the subject the writing sounds mechanical, even when the lengths vary.

