



# FINE-TUNING SENTENCES

GRADES 5-12



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**Improve sentence variety**

**Strengthen sentence impact**  [Change speeds]

**Create musical fluency**  [Revise for parallelism]

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# Improve sentence variety

Assess and adjust sentences.

## Vary sentence lengths.

Chart fluency.

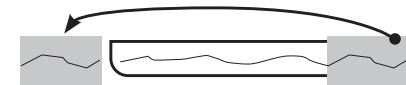
Charting Sentence Fluency		
Sentence #	# of Words	First two words in the sentence
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

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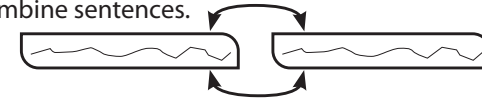
## Vary sentence beginnings and types.

Relocate words and phrases.

Flip a sentence.



Combine sentences.



Pad the outside of a sentence.



Pad the inside of a sentence.



# Charting Sentence Fluency

Sentence #	# of Words	First two words

Sentence #	# of Words	First two words

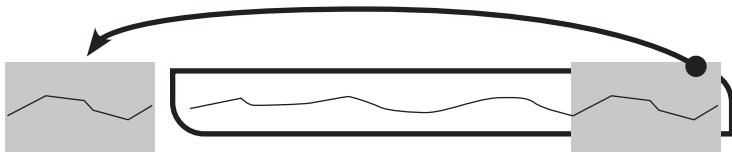
# Charting Sentence Fluency


# Relocate Words & Phrases

## to improve sentence variety

### FLIP A SENTENCE

Rearrange the order of the words in the sentence without adding, deleting, or changing any of them.

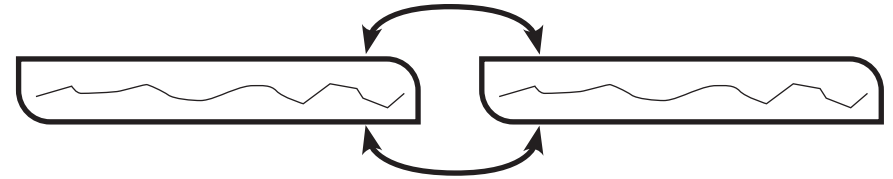


I purchased a burger  
at McDonald's.

At McDonald's, I purchased  
a burger.

### COMBINE SENTENCES

Link two shorter sentences by using a connecting word (e.g., *and*, *but*, *yet*, *or*, *because*) and a comma. Eliminate repetitive words found in both sentences.



Burgers are delicious.  
Burgers are greasy.

Burgers are delicious, yet  
greasy.

### PAD THE OUTSIDE OF A SENTENCE

Add a phrase to (the beginning or ending of) the sentence. This phrase can add details about *when*, *where*, *why*, or *how*. Commas are often needed before/after these phrases.



I bought a burger at McDonald's.

After school, I bought a burger at McDonald's.

I bought a burger at McDonald's because I missed lunch.

After school, I bought a burger at McDonald's because I missed lunch.

### PAD THE INSIDE OF A SENTENCE

Combine two sentences by inserting words or phrases of one sentence inside of the other. Commas are needed before and after these phrases.



I purchased a burger at  
McDonald's. It included  
cheese and ketchup only.

I purchased a burger, with  
cheese and ketchup only, at  
McDonald's.

# Strengthen sentence impact



## Change Sentence Speeds

NARRATIVE

**Short =  
fast/urgent action**

Long = calm action

INFORMATIVE

**Short =  
important  
information**

Long = thoughtful information

Reveal purposeful reasons to incorporate *intentional* fragments.

1. Emphasize information.
2. Create drama and add voice.
3. Respond to a question or exclamation.
4. Replicate conversational dialogue.

# Changing



# speeds

## NARRATIVE

**Short =  
fast/urgent action**

Janet had to hurry.

The bus was coming.

She heard its wheels squeal.

She saw its yellow face.

It turned down her street.

She had no more time.

She ran out the door and down the drive to catch only the stench of lingering  
exhaust fumes.

Long = calm action

The rowboat has drifted at last to the end of the pond, but now its bow bumped  
into the rotting branches of a fallen tree that thrust thick fingers into the water.

*Tuck Everlasting, Natalie Babbitt*

## INFORMATIVE

**Short =  
important  
information**

We were moving down very orderly in Stairwell A.

We moved very slowly.

No one panicked.

My legs could not stop shaking.

My heart was pounding.

Some joked.

Some laughed.

All were nervous.

*Adapted from The Price We Pay, Adam Mayblum, The Writer's Presence: A Pool of Readings, Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan*

Long = thoughtful information

Soon, there was another wave of calm and quiet, and the ash that fell from the  
sky and settled on the grass and trees gave the park the peaceful feel of a light  
evening snowfall.

*The First Hours, Tim Townsend, The Writer's Presence: A Pool of Readings, Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan*

# Create musical fluency

Identify contributors and contaminators.

- Similes
- Metaphors
- Onomatopoeia
- Alliteration
- Parallel structure



## Revise for Parallelism

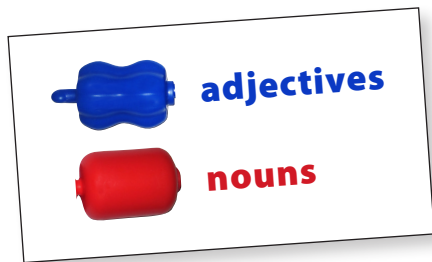
 **adjectives**

 **nouns**

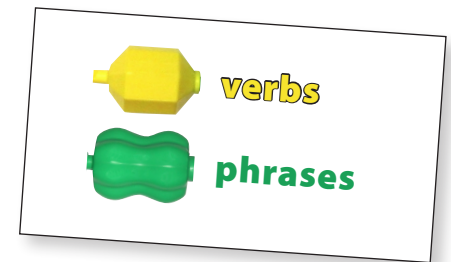
 **verbs**

 **phrases**





# Recognize Parallelism



See his pants... **brown baggy pants** with **two side pockets**, and two in back. There's candy in those pockets, **little chocolate candies** in **twisty silver wrappers**.

Excerpt from *Mr. George Baker*

I don't care if they're **little pigs** or **big pigs**, with **long snouts** or **short snouts**, with ears that stick up or ears that flop down. I don't mind if they're **black** or **white** or **ginger** or **spotted**. I just love pigs.

Excerpt from *All Pigs are Beautiful*

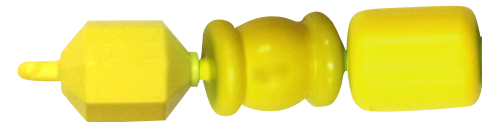


Dinosaurs **giggled** and **shuffled** and **stared**, ready to party, but a little bit **scared**.

Excerpt from *Saturday Night at the Dinosaur Stomp*

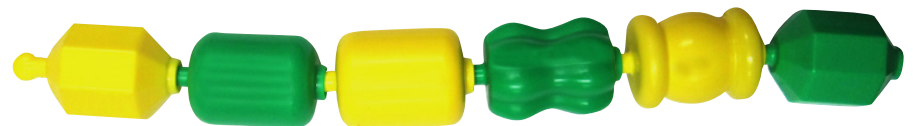
If kids ever crossed her, she'd **push 'em** and **smoosh 'em**, **lollapaloosh 'em**, **hammer 'em**, **slammer 'em**, kitz and **kajammer 'em**.

Excerpt from *The Recess Queen*



She **plunges through sluch ice** and **laps the chill water**, **snaps at a feather** that **drifts down from a goose wing**, then **splashes to shore** and **shakes herself like a dog**.

Excerpt from *Walk with a Wolf*



# Discussion: Turn & Talk

Take stock of students' current strengths and weaknesses when it comes to their sentence fluency.

- *Are sentences mostly the same length?*
- *Do many/most sentences begin with the same words?*
- *Are many/most sentences structured in a similar way?*
- *What are the contributors and contaminators within their sentences?*

Share lesson ideas you currently use to explicitly teach:

- *Sentence-length variety*
- *Sentence-beginning variety*
- *Sentence-structure variety*

Identify the lesson concepts within this training video that would best support your students.

Fine-Tuning Sentences: Grades 5-12

## BUILD SUCCESSFUL READERS & WRITERS

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To find additional resources related to this session, search the Smekens Education website using these keywords:

- readability
- boost fluency
- grammar and fluency

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