

Reworking Sentence Structure

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At the revision stage of the writing process, the main goal is to make the writing sound great. One approach is to vary the sentence structures in your paper. Start by reading your paper aloud. Highlight long sentences in one color and short sentences in another color. Then follow the tips below to rework your sentences until you find a pleasing balance.

Reworking Long, Repetitive Sentences

If you have long, wordy, or repetitive sentences, try splitting up some of your ideas between multiple sentences. Below are a few suggestions and examples for how to do this well when you are...

Explaining complex topics with multiple layers

Solution: To clarify your writing, underline the key individual ideas in a long and/or complex sentence. Then, try to limit yourself to discussing only two or three of them at a time.

Wordy Sentence: In Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians, Paul makes it clear that the Gospel is about what God does for us (1), not about what we can do for God, because he uses multiple images to explain (2) how much we need Him and how much we are helpless to save ourselves (3) – passages in which we discover the true power of the cross (4).

Resulting Sentences:

1. In Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians, Paul clarifies that the Gospel is about what God does for us (1) – not what we can do for God – through his powerful imagery (2).
2. These images reveal the true power of the cross (4) by demonstrating that we truly need Him and are helpless to save ourselves (3).

Avoiding repetition (in content and style)

Solution: To avoid repetition, underline your key ideas and double underline your repeated sentence structures in each paragraph, and then rewrite the material to include each key idea only once.

Repetitive Sentences: I never understood how much I needed God before coming to APU. Before enrolling here as a freshman, I did not realize that I would continue to need Him even after I became a Christian because I felt like my faith was something I was supposed to do for God, and so I tried to do a lot of good service things to put my gifts to work for Him. Before experiencing burnout at APU, I thought I was capable of doing good things for God on my own.

Resulting Sentences:

1. Before coming to APU, I never understood how much I would need God even after becoming a Christian.
2. I felt like faith was something I was supposed to live out for God, so I tried to engage in multiple service opportunities where I could put my gifts to work for Him.
3. After experiencing burnout, I grew to understand that I am not capable of doing anything worthwhile or lasting without God.

Reworking Short, Choppy Sentences

If you have short, choppy sentences, try combining several ideas into one sentence. Below are a few suggestions for...

Acknowledging counterarguments and limiting factors

Short, Choppy Sentences: The tree in Psalm 1 is a metaphor. It contains deep spiritual meaning for believers today. Some people think it is not relevant for Christians. This is because it is a symbol found in the Old Testament, not the New Testament. I disagree with this perspective.

Solution: By using “although,” “whereas,” and “while” phrases at the beginning and end of these sentences, counterarguments and limiting factors can be acknowledged and ideas can be linked within a single sentence.

1. *Whereas* the tree in Psalm 1 is a metaphor, Christians can relate deeply with its experience.
2. *Although* Psalms is in the Old Testament, its message is certainly relevant for believers today.
3. *While* reading Psalm 1, Christians should explore its deep spiritual meaning.

Including descriptions of the main topic

Short, Choppy Sentences: The tree in Psalm 1 has many symbols. For example, it is located along a stream. The stream is continually running. This represents a person who meditates on God’s Word day and night. The tree also has leaves that do not wither. This means that we will not dry up or lose spiritual health when our lives are saturated with the Word of God.

Solution: By adding an introductory phrase before or after the main topic, several ideas can be combined into one sentence. The introductory phrases can be verb phrases, adjective phrases, or prepositional phrases (as long as they describe the topic).

1. Meditating on God’s Word day and night, *the blessed man* resembles the tree alongside a stream of running water.
2. Constantly flowing with new water, *the stream* represents a constant flow of God’s Word into our hearts.
3. With leaves that do not wither, *the tree in Psalm 1* represents our lives when we are saturated in the Word of God.

Showing relationships of cause and effect

Short, Choppy Sentences: The tree has traits that many people want. It bears its fruit in season, has leaves that do not wither, and prospers in whatever it does. The Bible says we can have this kind of fruitfulness, vitality, and blessing too. These traits come when we let the Word of God permeate our lives.

Solution: To show relationships of cause and effect, use “since” (when what follows comes after) or “because” phrases at the beginning or end of these sentences and combine them. Another option is to use “If... then” constructions or phrases that start with “when” or “whenever.”

1. *Because* the tree has appealing qualities, we want to become like the tree.
We want to become like the tree because the tree has such appealing qualities.
2. *If* we let God’s Word permeate our lives, *then* we will enjoy the fruit, vitality, and blessing of the Psalm 1 tree.
3. *Since* coming to Christ, many Christians have felt the fruitfulness, vitality, and blessing described in Psalm 1.
4. We can resemble the tree in its fruitfulness, vitality, and blessing *when* we let the Word of God permeate our lives.