

## WORK SHEET    Clauses & Sentence

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### Part 1: How to write varied sentences

#### Sub-skill 1: Varying Sentence Length (mixing long and short sentences)

A paragraph consisting entirely of short sentences (or entirely of long ones) can be dull.

**Task 1. Read the following paragraph and combine some of the paragraph's short sentences into longer ones so as to create a more interesting passage.**

Drag racing ( 直线竞速赛 ) began in California in the 1940s. It was an alternative to street racing. Street racing was illegal and dangerous. It flourished in the 1950s and 1960s. Eventually, it became almost a rite of passage. Then, during the 1970s, almost one-third of America's racetracks closed. Today, however, drag racing is making a comeback.

#### Sub-skill 2: Combining choppy simple sentences

Some novice writers rely on simple sentences and coordination because they are afraid of making sentence structure errors. However, strings of short simple sentences can be tedious and sometimes hard to understand. You can revise choppy sentences by using coordination, subordination or embedding to combine them.

**Task 2. Read the original paragraph below and compare it with the revised three versions. Tell which revised version uses which device (coordination, subordination or embedding) to add variety.**

#### Original:

John Peter Zenger was a newspaper editor. He waged and won an important battle for freedom of the press in America. He criticized the policies of the British governor. He was charged with criminal libel as a result. Zenger's lawyers were disbarred. Andrew Hamilton defended him. Hamilton convinced the jury that Zenger's criticisms were true. Therefore, the statements were not libelous.

#### Revised version by using \_\_\_\_\_:

John Peter Zenger was a newspaper editor. He waged and won an important battle for freedom of the press in America. He criticized the policies of the British governor and as a result, he was charged with criminal libel. Zenger's lawyers were disbarred. Andrew Hamilton defended him. Hamilton convinced the jury that Zenger's criticisms were true. Therefore, the statements were not libelous.

**Revised version by using \_\_\_\_\_:**

John Peter Zenger was a newspaper editor who waged and won an important battle for freedom of the press in America. He criticized the policies of the British governor and as a result, he was charged with criminal libel. When Zenger's lawyers were disbarred, Andrew Hamilton defended him. Hamilton convinced the jury that Zenger's criticisms were true. Therefore, the statements were not libelous.

**Revised version by using \_\_\_\_\_:**

John Peter Zenger was a newspaper editor who waged and won an important battle for freedom of the press in America. He criticized the policies of the British governor and as a result, he was charged with criminal libel. When Zenger's lawyers were disbarred, Andrew Hamilton defended him, convincing the jury that Zenger's criticisms were true. Therefore, the statements were not libelous.

**Notes:** This final revision of the original string of choppy sentences is interesting and readable because it is composed of varied and logically linked sentences. The final short simple sentence has been retained for emphasis.

**Task 3. Using coordination, subordination, and embedding, revise the following string of choppy simple sentences into a more varied and interesting paragraph.**

The first modern miniature golf course was built in New York in 1925. It was an indoor course with 18 holes. Entrepreneurs Drake Delanoy and John Ledbetter built 150 more indoor and outdoor courses. Garnet Carter made miniature golf a worldwide fad. Carter built an elaborate miniature golf course. He later joined with Delanoy and Ledbetter. Together they build more miniature golf courses. They abbreviated playing distances. They highlighted the game's hazards at the expense of skill. This made the game much more popular. By 1930, there were 25,000 miniature golf courses in the United States. Courses grew more elaborate. Hazards grew more bizarre. The craze spread to London and Hong Kong. The expansion of miniature golf grew out of control. Then, interest in the game declined. By 1931, most miniature golf courses were out of business. The game was revived in the early 1950s. Today, there are between eight and ten thousand miniature golf courses. The architecture of miniature golf remains an enduring form of American folk art. (Adapted from *Games*)

**Background knowledge:** In 1926, Drake Delanoy and John Ledbetter built New York City's first outdoor miniature golf course on top of a skyscraper. Delanoy and Ledbetter copied Thomas Fairborn's process of using crushed cottonseed hulls and infringed upon Fairborn's patent. Eventually, a financial arrangement was arrived at between Delanoy and Ledbetter and Fairborn that let the cottonseed hull process be used over 150 roof top miniature courses in New York City.

**Part 2: How to write concise sentences****Sub-skill 1: Eliminating wordiness**

1) eliminating **deadwood** (unnecessary phrases that take up space and add nothing to meaning)

Eg. ~~There were~~ many factors ~~that~~ influenced his decision to become a priest.

In this article, ~~it~~ discusses lead poisoning.

Shoppers ~~who are~~ looking for bargains often go to outlets.

## 2) eliminating utility words

Utility words simply act as fillers. They include nouns with imprecise meanings (factors, situations, type, aspect, etc.); adjectives so general that they are almost meaningless (good, bad, important); and common adverbs denoting degree (basically, actually, quite, very, really). You may just delete the utility word; if you cannot, replace it with a more precise word.

Eg. The scholarship ~~basically~~ offered Jack a ~~good~~ opportunity to study in Spain.

It was ~~actually~~ a worthwhile book, but I didn't ~~really~~ finish it.

## 3) eliminating circumlocution

Circumlocution is taking a roundabout way to say something (using 5 words when 1 word will do)

Eg: it is not unlikely that the trend will continue.

Revised: the trend will probably continue.

## Sub-skill 2: Eliminating unnecessary repetition

### 1) reducing redundancy

Eg: The twins kept having ~~recurring~~ cold symptoms.

The two candidates share several positions ~~in common~~.

### 2) substituting a pronoun

Fictional detective Miss Marple has solved many crimes. The Murder at the Vicarage was one of ~~Miss Marple's~~ (her) most challenging cases.

### 3) creating an appositive

Red Barber ~~was~~ (,) a sportscaster. ~~He~~ was known for his colorful expressions.

### 4) creating a complex sentence

American value freedom of speech. ~~Freedom of speech~~ (,) which is guaranteed by the First Amendment.

## Task 4. Eliminate any unnecessary repetition of words or ideas in the following paragraph. Also, revise to eliminate deadwood, utility words, and circumlocution.

For a wide variety of different reasons, more and more people today are choosing a vegetarian diet. There are three kinds of vegetarians: strict vegetarians eat no animal foods at all; lactovegetarians eat dairy products, but they do not eat meat, fish, poultry, or eggs; and ovolactovegetarians eat eggs and dairy products, but they do not eat meat, fish, or poultry. Famous vegetarians include such well-known people as George Bernard Shaw, Leonardo da Vinci, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Mahatma Gandhi. Like these well-known vegetarians, the vegetarians of today have good reasons for becoming vegetarians. For instance, some religions recommend a vegetarian diet. Some of these religions are Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Hinduism. Other people turn to vegetarianism for reasons of health or for reasons of hygiene. These people believe that meat is a source of potentially harmful chemicals, and they believe meat contains infectious organisms. Some people feel meat may cause digestive problems and may lead to other difficulties as well. Other vegetarians believe we should eat the plants. Finally, there are facts and evidence to suggest that a vegetarian diet may possibly help people live longer lives. A vegetarian diet may do this by reducing the incidence of heart disease and lessening the incidence of some cancers. (Adapted from Jane Brody's *Nutrition Book*)

## Sub-skill 3: Tightening rambling sentences

Rambling sentences refer to sentences which combine nonessential words, unnecessary repetition and

complicated syntax.

**Task 5. Revise the following sentences according to the instructions.**

1) eliminating excessive coordination

**Wordy:** Puerto Rico is a large island in the Caribbean and it is very mountainous, and it has steep slopes, and they fall to gentle plains along the coast.

**Revised:**

2) eliminating excessive adjective clauses

**Wordy:** Moby Dick, which is a novel about a white whale, was written by Herman Melville, who was friendly with Nathaniel Hawthorne, who urged him to revise the first draft.

**Revised:**

3) eliminating wordy prepositional phrases and noun constructions

**Wordy:** He spoke in a confident manner and with a lot of authority.

**Revised:**

4) eliminating excessive passive constructions

**Wordy:** Water rights are being fought for in court by Indian tribes, such as the Papago in Arizona.

**Revised:**

**Task 6. Revise the rambling sentences in the following paragraph by eliminating excessive coordination, unnecessary use of passive voice and overuse of adjective clauses, prepositional phrases and noun constructions.**

Some colleges that have been in support of fraternities for a number of years are at this time in the process of conducting a reevaluation of the position of those fraternities on campus. In opposition to the fraternities are a fair number of students, faculty members, and administrators who claim fraternities are inherently sexist, which they say makes it impossible for the groups to exist in a coeducational institution, which is supposed to offer equal opportunities for members of both sexes. More and more members of the college community also see fraternities as elitist as well as sexist and favor their abolition. In addition, many point out that fraternities are associated with dangerous practices, such as hazing and alcohol abuse.

However, some students, faculty, and administrators remain whole-heartedly in support of traditional fraternities, which they believe are responsible for helping students make the acquaintance of people and learn the leadership skills that they believe will be of assistance to them in their future lives as adults supporters of fraternities believe that students should retain the right to make their own social decisions and they think that joining a fraternity is one of those decisions and they also believe fraternities are responsible for providing valuable services. Some of these are tutoring, raising money for charity, and running campus escort services. Therefore, some individuals are not of the opinion that the abolition of traditional fraternities makes sense.

### **Part 3: How to write effective sentences**

#### **Sub-skill 1: Conveying emphasis through word order**

1) *beginning with important ideas*

**Original:** There is heavy emphasis on the development of computational skills at MIT.

**Revised:** MIT places heavy emphasis on the development of computational skills.

**(Note:** placing an empty phrase like *there is* or *there are* at the beginning of a sentence generally weakens the

sentence.)

## 2) Ending with important ideas

Eg. Civil engineers quietly shape the history of nations around the world. They should receive much more attention from the public---and they deserve that attention.

### Sub-skill 2: Conveying emphasis through sentence structure

A **cumulative sentence** begins with an independent clause, following by additional words, phrases or clauses that expand or develop the idea. A **periodic sentence** moves from supporting details, in the form of modifying phrases and dependent clauses, to the sentence's key idea, which is placed in the independent clause at the end of the sentence.

**Example:** More women than ever before are running for office. They are encouraged by the success of other female candidates.

**Cumulative:** More women than ever before are running for office, encouraged by the success of other female candidates.

**Periodic:** Encouraged by the success of other female candidates, more women than ever before are running for office.

**Task 7. Combine each of the following sentence groups into one sentence that subordinates supporting details to the main idea. In each case, create either a periodic or cumulative sentence, depending on which structure you think will best convey the sentence's emphasis. Add, delete, change, or reorder words when necessary.**

1. Today's college students are under a good deal of stress. Job prospects in some fields are not very good. Financial aid is not as easy to come by as it was in the past.
2. The term *student shock* was coined several years ago. This term describes a syndrome that may include depression, anxiety, headaches, and eating and sleeping disorders.
3. Many students are overwhelmed by the vast array of courses and majors offered at their colleges. They tend to be less decisive. They take longer to choose a major and to complete school.
4. Some colleges are responding to the pressures that students feel. They hold stress-management workshops and suicide-prevention courses. They advertise the services of their counseling centers. They train students as peer counselors. They improve their vocational counseling services.
5. The fears of today's college students are based on reality. They are afraid there are too many graduates and too few jobs.