

Syntax: Sentence Structure

Examine sentence patterns and variety for an effect

Sentence Patterns

- **Functional**

Declarative (Statement)
Interrogative (Question)
Imperative (Command)
Exclamatory (Exclamation)

- **Grammatical**

Simple (one subject, one verb)

EX: By keeping a close watch over every penny and by refusing to spend unnecessarily, Tom and Mary saved money and paid all their debts (One independent clause).

Compound (two independent clauses joined by a conjunction or a Semicolon).

EX: Go and speak (two or more independent clauses).

Complex (one independent, one or more dependent clauses)

EX: When I really understand grammar and when I actually put it to use, my grades in English will improve (two dependent clauses and one independent clause).

Compound-Complex (two or more independent and one or more dependent clauses)

EX: Where you go I will go, and where you dwell I will dwell (two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses)

- **Rhetorical**

Loose/Cumulative (Main idea stated at the beginning of the sentence followed by additional information)

EX: He resigned after denouncing his accusers and asserting his own innocence time and time again (the sentence continues after the main idea has been stated).

Periodic (Main idea withheld until the end of the sentence)

EX: After denouncing his accusers and asserting his own innocence time and time again, the State Department Official resigned (main idea is suspended until the end).

Balanced (the phrases or clauses balance each other in likeness or structure, meaning, or length.)

EX: To err is human, to forgive divine.
But, in a large sense, we can not dedicate, we cannot Consecrate, we cannot hallow, this ground.
Together we planned the house, together we built it, and
Together we watched it go up in smoke.

- **Rhetorical Techniques Used in Syntax**

Antithesis (A contrast used for emphasis)

EX: India is a poetic nation, yet it demands new electrical plants. It is a mystical nation, yet it wants new roads. It is traditionally a peaceful nation, yet it could, if mislead, inflame Asia.

EX: A man dies on the shore; his body remains with his friends, and the “mourners go about the streets”; but when a man falls overboard at sea and is lost, there is a suddenness in the event which gives it an air of awful mystery.

Juxtaposition (Unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another, creating an effect of surprise)

EX: The apparition of these facts in the crowd:/Petals on a wet, Black bough.

Parallelism (Structural similarity between sentences or parts of a sentence)

EX: He was walking, running, and jumping for joy.

Repetition (Words, sounds, and ideas used more than once for enhancing rhythm and creating emphasis)

EX: “...government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

Rhetorical Questions (A question which expects no answer—used to draw attention to a point, stronger than a direct statement)

EX: “Shall the blessed sun of heaven prove a micher and eat blackberries? A question not to be ask’d. Shall the son of England prove a thief and take purses? A question to be ask’d.

--I Henry IV

- **Sentence Patterns**

Basic (S-V-C)

EX: John hit the ball.

Inversion (V-S, used for emphasis)

EX: He could never forgive this (S-V-C).
This he could never forgive (C-S-V).

At the last minute Sally rushed in (S-V).
At the last minute in rushed Sally (V-S).

They laid him down slowly and sadly.
Slowly and sadly they laid him down.

Sentence Openers

EX: He met a most attractive girl at the party.
At the party he met a most attractive girl.
He met, at the party, a most attractive girl.

Consequently, he is no longer interested in Marie.
He is, consequently, no longer interested in Marie.
He is no longer interested, consequently, in Marie.

- **Sentence Length**

Telegraphic (Shorter than five words)
Medium (Approximately eight words in length)
Long or Involved (thirty words or more)

- **Method or Expansion**

EX: The following beautiful and elaborate sentence from the Book of Common prayer is built on the simple sentences "Draw near":

Ye who do truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort, and make your humble confession to almighty God, devoutly kneeling.

Sentence Patterns

Strong, active verb...

1. Two problems perplexed the student.
2. Washington offers the tourist unique spots of interest.
3. The police dogs patrolled two areas.
4. I practice two polite table manners.
5. Cats purr for two reasons.
6. Two strange sights startled Steve when he emerged from the cave.

A question...

7. What tow places in the world would I like most to visit?
8. What to items in my desk exceed fourteen centimeters in length?
9. What two animals would I list as my favorites?
10. For what two reasons do little boys enjoy stomping in mud puddles?
11. What two facts do I know about Abraham Lincoln?
12. What two things would happen if chickens would refuse to lay eggs just before Easter?

An exclamation...

13. Two terrible things happened today!
14. Two happy events have occurred in my life!
15. Two unusual things happened to me in the hospital!
16. I do want a donkey ride for two reasons!
17. What tow blessings I have received!
18. What tow incredible places of luck I have had!

Adverb opener...

19. Wisely, Helen made two course choices.
20. Actually, I enjoyed the storm for two reasons.
21. Happily, Gary thought of two ways to please his parents.
22. Specifically, the teacher requested the class to do two assignments.
23. Frankly, I enjoy writing for two reasons.
24. Suddenly, as I slept in the woods at night, I heard two strange noises.

Prepositional phrase opener...

25. In Southern California a tourist will find two unique spots of interest.
26. For two reasons I enjoy living in Brownsville.
27. Among all American cities I would most like to visit two.
28. On the way to work I see two knods of people.
29. Through my magic glasses I saw two amazing sights.
30. Down the street live two interesting people.

The verb before the subject...

31. Beside the house grew two large trees.
32. Over the fort flew the flags of two nations.
33. Along the boulevard sped two modern cars.
34. Throughout the story appear two fascinating characters.
35. On my street live two famous people.
36. Out of the darkness leaped two strange animals.

Conversation or quotation...

37. A sidewalk complains, "I have a hard life in two ways."
38. San Francisco, where Tony Bennett "left his heart," has two appeals for the romanticist.
39. "I have two ways of earning extra money," said Jim.
40. "Two strange things happened to me in the supermarket," reported Louise.
41. "For two reasons I'll eat you up," the troll said to the Billy Goats.
42. "Two exciting things happened to me on my holiday!" related Jane.

Apposition...

43. London, that English city on the Thames, offers two special tourist attractions.
44. Honolulu, a gourmet's paradise, offers the tourist two special restaurants.
45. Two adjectives, bold and sophisticated, describe Phoenix.
46. Tucson combines two cultures: the Spanish/Indian and the American West.
47. Two American cities, Los Angeles and Washington, appeal to me.
48. I used a sharp tool, a saw, to create two objects.

Adverbial clause opener...

49. If I became lost in a crowd and could not find my parents, I would do two things.
50. When I find the pot of gold, I will buy two things.
51. While I shopped for weekly groceries, I discovered two ways to save money.
52. After the dictator seized control, the situation in his country changed in two ways.
53. Because Helen attended summer session at the college, she acquired two new skills.
54. Though critics have panned the play, I found two redeeming features in it.

Parallel structure...

55. Washing dishes, cleaning house, and doing laundry annoy me for two reasons.
56. Swimming, fishing, and camping make summertime delightful in two ways.
57. Listening in class, following instruction, and completing my assignments make me feel better about myself in two ways.
58. Respecting myself, respecting others, and respecting property make me a better citizen in two ways.
59. With two purposes in mind, the professor told the class to write in ink, to use only yellow paper, and to create four margins.

Methods of Structure / Organization / Movement in Literature

All good writing has a system of **organization** or **structure**. **Syntax** is concerned with the sequence of words; organization is concerned with the sequence of paragraphs or stanzas. Organization is sometimes called the **movement** of a passage of prose or poetry.

1. General to specific (deductive)
2. Specific to general (inductive)
3. Chronological time (time sequence)
4. Narrative (order of occurrence or order of telling)
5. Association/memory (one object to another or by memories)
6. Movement to lack of movement (storm to calm or calm to storm)
7. Observation
8. Sensory (organized by senses)
9. Spatial (inside to outside; far to near; top to bottom; fall to rise; flight and pursuit)
10. Comparison and contrast (opposites)
11. Fact and examples
12. Definition
13. Question and answer
14. Analogy or imagery ordered
15. Cause and effect
16. Order of importance (most to least; least to most)
17. Function
18. Process
19. Allusion
20. Emotions
21. Dominant impression to least dominant impression (or reverse)
22. Abstract to concrete (or reverse)
23. Past to present or present to past
24. By seasons
25. Disorder to order or order to disorder
26. Gain to loss or loss to gain

Examining the Syntax Within a Single Sentence

From *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White

Next morning when the first light came into the sky and the sparrows stirred in the trees, when the cows rattled their chains and the rooster crowed and the early automobiles went whispering along the road, Wilbur awoke and looked for Charlotte.

From *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain

Col Grangerford was very tall and very slim, and had a darkish-pale complexion, not a sign of red in it anywheres; he was clean-shaved every morning all over his thin face, and he had the thinnest kind of lips, and the thinnest kind of nostrils, and a high nose, and heavy eyebrows, and the blackest kind of eyes, sunk so deep back that they seemed like they was looking out of caverns at you, as you may say.

From "A Way You'll Never Be" by Ernest Hemingway

In the grass and the grain, beside the road, and in some places scattered over the road, there was much material: a field kitchen, it must have come when things were going well; many of the calfskin-covered haversacks, stick bombs, helmets, rifles, sometimes one butt-up, the bayonet stuck in the dirt, they had dug quite a little to the last; stick bombs, helmets, rifles, entrenching tools, ammunition boxes, star-shell pistols, their shells scattered about, medical kits, gas masks, empty gas-mask cans, a squat tri-podded machine gun in a nest of empty shells, full belts protruding from the boxes, the water cooling can empty and on its side, the breech block gone, the crew in odd position, and around them, in the grass, more of the typical papers.

Opening sentence of *The Wars* by Timothy Findley

She was standing in the middle of the railroad tracks.

Examining Syntax Within a Longer Passage Using SOS Sentence Opening Sheet

From “The Scarlet Ibis” by James Hurst

It was in the clove of seasons, summer was dead but autumn had not yet been formed, that the ibis lit in the bleeding tree. (1) The flower garden was stained with rotting brown magnolia petals and ironweeds grew rank amid the purple phlox. (2) The five o’clocks by the chimney still marked time, but the oriole nest in the elm was untenanted and rocked back and forth like an empty cradle. (3) The last graveyard flowers were blooming, and their smell drifted across the cotton field and through every room of our house, speaking softly the names of our dead. (4)

It’s strange that all this is so clear to me, now that summer had long since fled and time has had its way. (5) A grindstone stands where the bleeding tree stood, just outside the kitchen door, and now if an oriole sings in the elms, its song seems to die up in the leaves, a silvery dust. (6) The flower garden is prim, the house a gleaming white, and the pale fence across the yard stand straight and spruce. (7) But sometimes (like right now), as I sit in the cool, green-draped parlor, the grindstone begins to turn, and time with all its changes is ground away – and I remember Doodle. (8)

Sentence	First Four Words	Special Features	Verbs	# Words
1	It was in the	Personification Metaphor	Was, was, had been born, lit	25
2	The flower garden was	Imagery Alliteration	Was stained, grew	18
3	The five o’clocks by	Personification Simile	Marked, was, rocked	27
4	The last graveyard flowers	Personification Alliteration	Was blooming, drifted	28
5				
6				
7				
8				

“A Typical School Day”

Diction and Syntax Analysis

Directions:

In paragraph 1 the writer tells about his young son’s typical days while he was attending a private school. Paragraph 2 is a summary of paragraph 1. Read the two paragraphs and then answer the questions that follow.

Paragraph 1

His days were rich in formal experience. Wearing overalls and an old sweater (the accepted uniform of the private seminary), he sallied forth at morn accompanied by a nurse or a parent and walked (or was pulled) two blocks to a corner where the school bus made a flag stop. This flashy vehicle was as punctual as death: seeing us waiting at the cold curb, it would sweep to a halt, open its mouth, suck the boy in, and spring away with an angry growl. It was a good deal like a train picking up a bag of mail. At school the scholar was worked on for six or seven hours by half a dozen teachers and a nurse, and was revived on orange juice in midmorning. In a cinder court he played games supervised by an athletic instructor, and in a cafeteria he ate lunch worked out by a dietician.

Paragraph 2

His days followed a set routine. HE wore overall and an old sweater, as everyone else did in his school. In the morning, a parent or nurse walked the two blocks with him to the corner where he met the school bus. The bus was always on time. During the six or seven hours of the school day, he had six teachers. The school also employed a nurse and a dietician. Games were supervised. The children ate in the cafeteria. Orange juice was served during the morning session.

Questions

1. What impression of the school do you get form thinking of the clothing as an “accepted uniform” rather than as what “everyone else” wears?
2. What do you learn bout the boy’s attitude toward the school from the first paragraph which you do not learn form the second?
3. In the first paragraph, what is the purpose of the words used in speaking of the bus? Quote some of the words and phrases used, and discuss the effect they have in creating images and ideas in the reader’s mind.
4. The first paragraph tells that the boy was “worked on ...by half a dozen teachers and a nurse.” The second tells that he “had six teachers.” What difference does the change in wording make in your impression of the way the school staff regards its students?
5. Why is it important to the general effect of the first paragraph to know that the games are supervised by an athletic director and that meals are planned by a dietician?
6. Explain why paragraph 1 is more effective and interesting than paragraph 2. Show how particular, words, phrases, and sentences create pictures and ideas for the reader.