



Varying Sentence Structure

Narrative Writing



I started to accelerate over the hill. I began to notice an unsettling sound from beneath the gas pedal. I pointed in out to Josh and Parker. I started to pull the car over. I stepped out of the car and noticed black smoke coming out of the car. I tried to call Zach, but he didn't answer.

Within a mile of the gas station, I began to accelerate over a large hill. I soon noticed an unsettling sound coming from beneath the gas pedal. It was a ticking time bomb ready to explode. Frightened, I asked Josh and Parker if they too could hear the insistent rattle. I started to pull the car over at Josh's recommendation, although I was sure it was nothing. I stepped out of the car and noticed black smoke tumbling out of the exhaust pipe, wrapping itself around everything in its path. Upon this discovery, I quickly tried to call Zach; however, he didn't answer. I was stranded.

How to Improve Sentence Variety

The first way to improve sentence variety is to **vary sentence length**.

When most of your sentences are about the same length, your writing can feel choppy and robotic. Look for places where you can add some very short sentences, and other places where you can combine sentences to make them longer.

I started to accelerate over the hill **(7)**. I noticed a sound from beneath the pedal **(8)**. I pointed in out to Josh and Parker **(8)**. I started to pull the car over **(7)**. I stepped out of the car and noticed black smoke coming out **(12)**. I tried to call Zach, but he didn't answer **(9)**.

How to Improve Sentence Variety

Within a mile of the gas station, I began to accelerate over a large hill **(15)**. I soon noticed an unsettling sound coming from beneath the gas pedal (12). It was a ticking time bomb ready to explode **(9)**. Frightened, I asked Josh and Parker if they too could hear the insistent rattle **(14)**. I started to pull the car over at Josh's recommendation, although I was sure it was nothing **(17)**. I stepped out of the car and noticed black smoke tumbling out of the exhaust pipe, wrapping itself around everything in its path **(23)**. Upon this discovery, I quickly tried to call Zach; however, he didn't answer **(13)**. We were stranded **(3)**.

How to Improve Sentence Variety

Another strategy is to **vary sentence beginnings**.

If a lot of your sentences start the same way, (*) like in this paragraph, it can make your writing feel repetitive.

I started to accelerate over the hill. I began to notice an unsettling sound from beneath the gas pedal. **I pointed** in out to Josh and Parker. **I started** to pull the car over. **I stepped** out of the car and noticed black smoke coming out of the car. **I tried** to call Zach, but he didn't answer.

How to Improve Sentence Variety

Within a mile of the gas station, I began to accelerate over a large hill. I soon noticed an unsettling sound coming from beneath the gas pedal. It was a ticking time bomb ready to explode. **Frightened**, I asked Josh and Parker if they too could hear the insistent rattle. I started to pull the car over at Josh's recommendation, although I was sure it was nothing. I stepped out of the car and noticed black smoke tumbling out of the exhaust pipe, wrapping itself around everything in its path. **Upon this discovery**, I quickly tried to call Zach; however, he didn't answer. I was stranded.

How to Improve Sentence Variety

The last way to improve your sentence variety is by **varying sentence styles**.

This paragraph contains several sentences that use the same style, with a simple subject, followed by a verb, and then a little more information. If we revise it, changing some of the sentences to give them a different style, it makes the paragraph more interesting.

I started to accelerate over the hill.

I pointed in out to Josh and Parker.

I started to pull the car over.

How to Improve Sentence Variety

Within a mile of the gas station, I began to accelerate over a large hill. **I soon noticed** an unsettling sound coming from beneath the gas pedal. It was a ticking time bomb ready to explode. **Frightened**, I asked Josh and Parker if they too could hear the insistent rattle. I started to pull the car over at Josh's recommendation, **although I was sure it was nothing**. I stepped out of the car and noticed black smoke tumbling out of the exhaust pipe, **wrapping itself around everything in its path**. **Upon this discovery**, I quickly tried to call Zach; **however, he didn't answer**. I was stranded.

NOW:

- Go through a chunk of your story and count the number of words in each sentence. If the total number in most sentences is close, revise for better variety.
- Read your story out loud and look for places where you are starting lots of sentences the same way. Revise them so they have different beginnings.
- Look through published stories for sentence styles you can imitate in your own writing, and add some of these styles to your story.