



SENTENCE VARIETY

Avoiding the SVO Cookie Cutter

Learning objectives

Identify an SVO sentence.

Identify the problem with an SVO sentence.

Identify how to combat the SVO problem through different techniques.

Identify the problems with the paragraph below:

The fair tax system is designed to eliminate the federal income tax and replace it with a national sales tax. This will impose a national flat rate for everyone in the country. This system will place a higher tax on every good sold. This ensures a flat rate fee for both legal citizens and illegal immigrants. Also this will eliminate the “tax on success” and favoring of the lower classes. Everyone will be treated equally. The fair tax system would be much easier for the government and for tax payers. This system would make consumers pay an added tax on sold goods. That way the government would not have to worry about loopholes or overcomplicated tax laws. If the government imposed the fair tax system this would eliminate the need for the IRS which would save the government money. The government would still need employees to collect the revenue, but this system would drastically reduce the number of employees needed. A great advantage of the fair tax system would be equality for everyone. Because the tax would be placed upon the sale of goods, every citizen would pay. This system also ensures that everyone pays an equal tax no matter how much or little their income is.

Problems with paragraph

1. Too many simple sentences. The paragraph seems choppy, stilted.
2. Sentences repeat the same word over and over (“this”).
3. Sentences follow the same monotonous SVO pattern:
 - Subject, Verb, Object. Subject, Verb, Object. Subject, Verb, Object. Subject, Verb, Object. Etc.

How to add variety to writing.

1. Join short, choppy sentences together using the techniques we have learned so far: subordination, coordination, semicolons, colons, and dashes.
2. Split up S and V with an interrupter phrase.
3. Begin sentence with an introductory phrase.
4. Condense and combine clauses, or expand and separate them.

1. Join choppy sentences using the techniques we have learned so far

Use subordination, coordination, semicolons, dashes, and colons to transform short, choppy, boring sentences into longer, more fluid sentences.

2. Split up S and V with an interrupter phrase

An interrupter is a word, phrase, or clause that significantly breaks the flow of a sentence.

Models:

- S, Interrupter, V, O.
 - The fish, *in all reality*, was fairly small.
 - My mom is usually late. Tonight she, *surprisingly*, was on time
- S, V, Interrupter, O
 - The fish was, *in all reality*, fairly small.
 - My mom is usually late. Tonight she was, *surprisingly*, on time.

3. Begin sentence with an introductory phrase

Common Options:

1. Begin with a participial phrase. Participles look like verbs and can be present (-ing) or past (-ed).
 - Original sentences: *I ran down the alley. I saw a fire escape ladder up to the roof.*
 - Revised sentence: *Running through the alley, I saw a fire escape up to the roof.*
2. Begin with a prepositional phrase. A preposition is a word like “over,” “under,” “before,” or “after” that shows either position or time.
 - Original sentence: *I looked under the picnic table. I saw a squirrel eating my sandwich.*
 - Revised sentence: *Under the picnic table, a squirrel furtively nibbled my sandwich.*

4a Condense and combine clauses.

Clauses can be condensed and combined in order to add variety to a paragraph.

Example:

- It was yesterday. The boy stood outside. It was very cold.
- Yesterday, the boy stood outside in the cold.

4b Expand and separate clauses

Clauses can also be expanded and then separated to create variety.

Example:

- Clause: The man saw the show.
- Expanded Clause: The man, at the newly renovated Fox theater, saw the show *Fiddler on the Roof*.