

From your own writing, choose several paragraphs to practice sentence variety by rearranging the sentence parts in your sentences. Identify the parts of the sentences that can be rearranged, and then rewrite those sentences, moving those parts to new places.

Focus 2

Sentence Imitating

Sentence imitating is the use of professional writers' sentences as models for writing your own sentences. The structure of your sentence is the same as the model's, but the content is different. The purpose is to increase your ability to vary sentence structure through a deliberate imitation of the structure of the model sentence.

Practice 1

Below are groups of three sentences. Two of the sentences in each group are identical in structure. The other sentence in the group, although competently written, is structurally different from the other two. Identify the sentence that is different. Answers are in the References on pages 158-159.

- 1a. Great was his care of them.
- b. Something else he saw.
- c. Chilling was her story of passion.
- 2a. The big thing, exciting yet frightening, was to talk to her, say what he hoped to do.
- b. There was also a rhino, who, from the tracks and the kicked-up mound of strawy dung, came there each night.
- c. An acceptable solution, simple and efficient, is to negotiate with the management, emphasize what the workers want to delete.
- 3a. Much later the accountant finished, ledgers in their vertical files on the right side of the desk, pencils and pens in their containers decorated with seals and designs on the shelf above the desk.
- b. This leader whose word was law among the boys who defied authority for the sake of defiance, was no more than twelve or thirteen years old and looked even younger.

- c. Soon afterwards they retired, Mama in her big oak bed on one side of the room, Emilio and Rosy in their boxes full of straw and sheepskins on the other side of the room.
- 4a. During rush-hour traffic, when his nerves were frazzled, Brent Hammond, twenty miles above the speed limit, hit his brakes, from which came sharp peals and leaden grindings as though the metal were alive and hurting.
- b. On stormy nights, when the tide was out, the bay of Fougere, fifty feet below the house, resembled an immense black pit, from which arose mutterings and sighs as if the sands down there had been alive and complaining.
- c. Aleck Sander stood out from the shadows, walking, already quite near in the moonless dark, a little taller than Big Ed, though there was only a few months' difference between them.
- 5a. Listening to evaluate the difference between the two violins, the concertmaster chose, glancing back and forth over the two instruments, the one with the slightly arched bow.
- b. Light flickered on bits of ruby glass and on sensitive capillary hairs in the nylon-brushed nostrils of the creature that quivered gently, gently, its eight legs spidered under it on rubber-padded paws.
- c. Pretending to take an interest in the New Season's Models, Gumbriil made, squinting sideways over the burning tip of his cigar, an inventory of her features.
- 6a. He reached over for the submachine gun, took the clip out that was in the magazine, felt in his pockets for the clips, opened the action and looked through the barrel, put the clip back in the groove of the magazine until it clicked, and then looked down the hill slope.
- b. Amused yet bewildered, near the sarcastic boy in a corner of the cafeteria, with a friend who had invited her and another whose boyfriend was his remarkably opposite twin, Joan thought constantly that noon about the ambivalence of her emotions.

- c. Abandoned and helpless, under the crude lean-to in the courtyard of the tin factory, beside the woman who had lost a breast and the man whose burned face was scarcely a face any more, Miss Sasaki suffered awfully that night from the pain in her broken leg.

Practice 2

Compare these two sentences: the first is a model; the second, an imitation. Notice how the imitation relied on the clues (**boldface**) of punctuation and certain kinds of words and word endings.

Example

Model: Pretending to take an interest in the New Season's Models, Gumbriil made, squinting sideways **over** the burning tip of his cigar, an inventory of her features.

Imitation: Listening to evaluate the difference between **the** two violins, the concertmaster chose, glancing back and forth **over** the two instruments, the one with the slightly arched bow.

Review the punctuation patterns in the model and the imitation. They are identical. In doing the imitation, the student worked on one sentence part at a time, concentrating on how that particular sentence part is structured, then imitated only that particular sentence part. The process is then repeated with the next sentence part, then the next, the next, and so forth.

First Sentence Part

Model: Pretending to take an interest in the New Season's Models,

Imitation: Listening to evaluate the difference between the two violins,

Second Sentence Part

Model: Gumbriil made,

Imitation: the concertmaster chose,

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Model: squinting sideways over the burning tip of his cigar.
Imitation: glancing back and forth over the two instruments.

Fourth Sentence Part

Model: an inventory of her features.

Imitation: the one with the slightly arched bow.

Notice that the two sentences are almost identical in structure; however, they are very different in content and somewhat different in length—the imitation uses more words. Duplicating the exact number of words in the model is not necessary. Don't focus on the words; focus, instead, on the structure.

Following the guidelines for sentence imitating mentioned earlier, write an imitation of each of these model sentences.

1. Great was his care of them.

Jack London, "All Gold Cañon"

2. The big thing, exciting yet frightening, was to talk to her, say what he hoped to do.

Bernard Malamud, The Assistant

3. He had never been hungrier, and he filled his mouth with wine, faintly tarry-tasting from the leather bag, and swallowed.

Ernest Hemingway, For Whom the Bell Tolls

4. Soon afterwards they retired, Mama in her big oak bed on one side of the room, Emilio and Rosy in their boxes full of straw and sheepskins on the other side of the room.

John Steinbeck, "Flight"

5. On stormy nights, when the tide was out, the bay of Fougere, fifty feet below the house, resembled an immense black pit, from which arose mutterings and sighs as if the sands down there had been alive and complaining.

Joseph Conrad, "The Idiots"

Here are sample imitations of the five model sentences above.

1. Chilling was her story of passion.
2. An acceptable solution, simple and efficient, is to negotiate with the management, emphasize what the workers want to delete.
3. The horse had never been nastier, and it threw its riders to the ground, cold and hard from the frost, and bolted.
4. Much later the accountant finished, ledgers in their vertical files on the right side of the desk, pencils and pens in their containers decorated with seals and designs on the shelf above the desk.
5. During rush-hour traffic, when his nerves were frazzled, Brent Hammond, twenty miles above the speed limit, hit his brakes, from which came sharp peals and leaden grindings as though the metal were alive and hurting.

Practice 3

From the two sentences (a and b) following each model sentence, select the one that imitates the sentence structure of the model; then write your own imitation of the model. All models are from *The Marriian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury.

1. One minute it was Ohio winter, with doors closed, windows locked, the panes blind with frost, icicles fringing every roof, children skiing on slopes, housewives lumbering like great black bears in their furs along the icy streets.
 - a. Near the race track where the Derby was held, a peanut vendor, with wrinkled skin, a face like an eagle, boldly stood almost directly in the line of the huge traffic, hawking his peanuts, describing their superb taste, rich aroma.
 - b. Yesterday it was the Boston Marathon, with crowds gathered, police ready, the runners covered with suntan oils, many limbering up, even wheelchair participants checking their equipment like careful auto mechanics with their tools of all sorts.

2. Named but unnamed and borrowing from humans everything but humanity, the robots stared at the nailed lids of their labeled F.O.B. boxes, in a death that was not even a death, for there had never been a life.
 - a. With the carousel slide projector carefully placed atop several books to provide the right height for perfect screen projection, with the slides placed within it, the right organization for the presentation, the lesson began.
 - b. Hesitant but not uncertain, and drawing from libraries all of her knowledge, she walked into the room for her comprehensive examination, with a feeling that was certainly not calm, because there would always be the unknown.
3. Here and there a fire, forgotten in the last rush, lingered and in a sudden excess of strength fed upon the dry bones of some littered shack.
 - a. Once or twice the siren, obscured by the sudden explosion, echoed but with a dreadful parody of itself sounded with a noise like a banshee.
 - b. Now and then, he tweaked his painted, bulbous nose, and the children nearby giggled at the bicycle-horn sound.

Practice 4

Write an imitation of each of the model sentences below.

1. One of these dogs, the best one, had disappeared.
Fred Gipson, Old Yeller
2. Among the company was a lawyer, a young man of about twenty-five.
Anton Chekhov, "The Bet"
3. Halfway there he heard the sound he dreaded, the hollow, rasping cough of a horse.
John Steinbeck, The Red Pony

4. Poppa, a good quiet man, spent the last hours before our parting moving aimlessly about the yard, keeping to himself and avoiding me.
Gordon Parks, "My Mother's Dream for Me"
5. Standing in the truck bed, holding onto the bars of the sides, rode the others, twelve-year-old Ruthie and ten-year-old Winfield, grime-faced and wild, their eyes tired but excited, their fingers and the edges of their mouths black and sticky from licorice whips, whined out of their father in town.
John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath

Practice 5

For each of the four model sentences below, there are two sentence imitations. Each of the sentence imitations approximates the structure of the model. First, match the imitations for each model. Next, write an imitation of each model.

Models

1. Near the spot upriver to which Mr. Tanimoto had transported the priests, there sat a large case of rice cakes which a rescue party had evidently brought for the wounded lying thereabouts but hadn't distributed.
John Hershey, Hiroshima
2. There was also a rhino, who, from the tracks and the kicked-up mound of strawy dung, came there each night.
Ernest Hemingway, Green Hills of Africa
3. The dark silence was there and the heavy shapes, sitting, and the little blue light burning.
Ray Bradbury, The Vintage Bradbury
4. Light flickered on bits of ruby glass and on sensitive capillary hairs in the nylon-brushed nostrils of the creature that quivered gently, gently, its eight legs spidered under it on rubber-padded paws.
Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451

Imitations

- a. Stars twinkled on pieces of broken shells and on ruined sand castles in the sea-drenched sand of the beach that stretched miles, endless miles, its many shells strewn on it by high-crested waves.
- b. At the place in the room where he had left his books, there was a stack of journals that had evidently been brought by several of the more academic students but hadn't been used by the teacher.
- c. The dense fog was there and the bloody bodies, dying, and the torn white flag waving.
- d. I sat on velvet grass and under spreading blue leaves in the light-yellow atmosphere of a planet that orbited, slowly, steadily, its six moons clinging close like newborn children.
- e. There was also a turtle, who, from the half-eaten tomato and the hole under the fence, had visited the garden that day.
- f. The big race was next and the line of cars, waiting, and the red flag ready.
- g. There was also the horror, which, from the odor and snake-belly sensation of dead flesh, came there each time.
- h. Outside the shack from which the patrol had started shooting, there was a blast of gunfire that the rebels had intended for the door lock but hadn't hit.

Practice 6

Identify three imitations of the model paragraph.

Model Paragraph

This is a snail shell, round, full, and glossy as a horse chestnut. Comfortable and compact, it sits curled up like a cat in the hollow of my hand. Milky and opaque, it has the pinkish bloom of the sky on a summer evening, ripening to rain. On its smooth, symmetrical face is pencilled with precision a perfect spiral, winding inward to the pin point center of the shell, the tiny dark

core of the apex, the pupil of the eye. It stares at me, this mysterious single eye—and I stare back.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Gift from the Sea

Paragraph 1

The school bus pulled up and let the children out. One of the little boys was running after his dog. The dog had followed him to school and refused to go home when the boy chased him. The other students thought it was funny when the dog ran into the school building. Somebody had left the door open on purpose.

Paragraph 2

When it snowed yesterday, I was at the library. The library is one near where I live and has many books that can help a lot with the assignments from school. A lot of my friends go there to visit with each other and to do some research and studying. The librarians are helpful when you need to find some books to do a history or English assignment. I like the library!

Paragraph 3

There is a snowflake, light, delicate, and fluffy as a piece of cotton. Swirling and blowing, it floats down from the sky like the seeds of the milkweed plant. White and bright, it has the gleam of the blinding sunlight and the reflecting moonlight, shining in silver. On its surface is stenciled a star, formed with its five or six symmetrical points, the arms of the snowflake, the body of it. It falls to earth, this crystal of beauty—and the earth melts it.

Paragraph 4

This is an old book, interesting, long, but thought-provoking as a philosophical treatise. Soiled but well read, it remains standing upright on my bookshelf mixed in with paperbacks. Analytic and probing, it reveals many pitfalls in the process of thinking, describing wrong conclusions. In its yellow pages are recorded with skill many criticisms, converging ultimately into the story of all people, the universal, timeless tale of every individual, the discourse on humanity. It speaks of man, this lengthy discourse—yet man ignores it.

Paragraph 5

Some rock stars are very colorful and exciting to watch when they perform at a live concert. Usually hundreds or thousands of

teenagers attend these concerts, which are usually held in large convention halls or sometimes outdoors in large parks or other public places. Music-lovers look forward to attending these exciting events. Despite what many people say, the behavior at the concerts is very good. It is noisy, but since noise is what anyone would expect at such concerts, nobody there really minds.

Paragraph 6

This is a room, dark, comfortable, and at times lonely as a silent cave. Small and private, it can absorb my thoughts like a sponge. Comfortable and secure, the room has a feeling of safety and peace, providing a hiding place. On its walls are varicolored posters, all reflecting moods of mine, ranging from joy to despair. The posters face me, those mirrors of my soul—and I reminisce.

Practice 7

Write a description that imitates the model paragraph.

Practice 8

Write an original paragraph five to ten sentences in length.

Include somewhere in the paragraph a sentence imitation of as many of the following model sentences as you can. Even if you use only one or two model sentences for imitation, in the rest of your paragraph try to write sentences (without the use of models) that are similar in structure to those associated with professional writing.

1. Over this rocky area relieved by a few shady tall persimmon trees the graduating class walked.

Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

2. A few hours before, he adored me, was devoted and worshipful, and now he was angry.

Anais Nin, The Diary of Anais Nin

3. Behind a billboard, on an empty lot, he opened the purse and saw a pile of silver and copper coins.

Charlie Chaplin, My Autobiography

4. The frozen earth thawed, leaving the short grass looking wet and weary.

Peter Abrahams, Tell Freedom

5. I was fourteen at the time, too young for a full-time job, but I managed to get a Bronx Home News route, for which I was paid five dollars a week.

Milton Kaplan, Commentary

6. In my robe and barefoot in the backyard, under cover of going to see about my new beans, I gave myself up to the gentle warmth and thanked God that no matter what evil I had done in my life He had allowed me to live to see this day.

Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings