

SYNTAX

Adapted from "With
Rigor for All" Workshop
by Carol Jago

Paraphrasing Activity

1. Model how to paraphrase a passage that contains complex syntax by breaking up long, cumulative sentences into short, simple ones.

SAMPLE MODEL

Original Passage:

Among the new objects that attracted my attention during my stay in the United States, none struck me more vividly than the equality of conditions. I discovered without difficulty the prodigious influence that this primary fact exercises on the march of society; it gives a certain direction to the public mind, a certain turn to the laws; to those governing, new maxims, and particular habits to the governed.

-Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. 1853

Paraphrase:

I noticed many things while visiting the United States. I especially noticed how equal the conditions of people's lives were. It was easy to see how this had a big effect on society. It causes people to think in certain ways. It influenced their laws. For those in power it means new rules. It also produced new behavior in those who are ruled.

2. Assign quotations to small groups of students, one quotation per group (samples included on the back of this sheet).
 3. Ask students to paraphrase the passage, putting it into their own words and into short sentences. This should be more than the gist of the passage. It should be a thorough restatement of the writer's ideas.
 4. Have groups read their passages and paraphrases with another group or whole class.
 5. Discuss how the structure of the original wording reinforces the writer's points.
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SYNTAX

Adapted from
"Introduction to
Sentence Combining" by
Richard Norquest @
[http://
grammar.about.com/od/
tests/a/introsc.htm](http://grammar.about.com/od/tests/a/introsc.htm)

Sentence Combining Activity

Combine these eight short sentences into one complex sentence.

- Mr. Adams was our English teacher.
- We were in high school.
- He was very knowledgeable about Shakespeare.
- He hated when kids talked in class.
- He coughed when he was getting mad.
- His pants were baggy.
- His shoes were neon green.
- He saw everything that went on in class.

Evaluate your sentence combinations.

After combining the set of sentences in a variety of ways, have students take time to evaluate their work and decide which combinations they like and which ones they do not. They may do this evaluation on their own or in groups, which will give them a chance to compare sentences. In either case, each student should read his/her sentence aloud as it is evaluated: how the sentence *sounds* can be just as revealing as how they look.

-Here are six basic qualities to consider when you evaluate new sentences:

1. **Meaning.** As far as you can determine, have you conveyed the idea intended by the original author.
2. **Clarity.** Is the sentence clear? Can it be understood on the first reading?
3. **Coherence.** Do the various parts of the sentence fit together logically and smoothly?
4. **Emphasis.** Are key words and phrases put in emphatic positions (usually at the very end or at the very beginning of the sentence)?
5. **Conciseness.** Does the sentence clearly express an idea without wasting words?
6. **Rhythm.** Does the sentence flow, or is it marked by awkward interruptions? Do the interruptions help to emphasize key points (an effective technique), or do they merely distract (ineffective technique)?