

A Few Sentence Patterns

Adapted from The Art of Styling Sentences: 20 Patterns for Success, 2nd ed.,
by Marie L. Waddell, Robert Esch, and Roberta R. Walker

1. Compound Sentence: Semicolon, No Conjunction

Example: The vicuña is a gentle animal living in the central Andes; its fleece often becomes the fabric for expensive coats.

*Same as above with a **connector**, such as however, hence, therefore, thus, then, moreover, nevertheless, likewise, consequently, and accordingly.

Example: This gadget won't work; therefore, there's no sense in buying it.

*Same as above but with a **coordinating conjunction** (also a connector) such as and, or, for, but, nor, yet, or so.

Example: It was snowing outside, and in the building Harold felt safe; he dreaded leaving his shelter for the long, dangerous trip home.

2. Compound Sentence with Explanatory Statement

Example: Darwin's Origin of the Species forcibly states a harsh truth: only the fittest survive.

3. A Series without a Conjunction

Example: The goals of the ecology-awareness movement are clear: breathable air, drinkable water, livable space, potable waterways.

Example: The attorney impeached her own credibility, misrepresenting the record, divining meanings that only she perceived, discovering motives that only she comprehended, denying the undeniable.

Example: The world of art is as universal as the wall paintings of primitive people, as varied as Picasso's art, as fleeting as some modern art, as enduring as Rembrandt.

4. Dependent Clauses in a Pair or in a Series

Example: Because it might seem difficult at first, because it may sound awkward or forced, because it often creates lengthy sentences where the thought "gets lost," this pattern seems forbidding to some writers, but it isn't all that hard; try it.

Example: In Biology 3130, Stella learned that a hummingbird does not really hum, that a screech owl actually whistles, and that storks prefer to wade in water than fly around carrying tiny babies.

5. Interrupting Modifier Between Subject and Verb

Example: A small drop of ink, falling like dew upon a thought, can make millions think.

Example: A small drop of ink, falling (as Byron said) like dew upon a thought, can make millions think.

6. A Full Sentence as Interrupting Modifier

Example: An important question about education—should universities teach the classics or just courses in science and practical subjects?—was the topic of a famous debate by Arnold and Huxley.

7. Introductory or Concluding Participles

Example: Printed in Old English and bound in real leather, the new edition of Beowulf was too expensive for the family to buy.

Example: The wrangler reached for his lasso, knowing he must help to corral the straying steers.

8. Paired Constructions

Example: American tourists must realize that violation of laws in China are serious not only because they flaunt traditional codes of behavior but also because they reflect contempt for the culture.

9. The Short Simple Sentence for Relief or Dramatic Effect

Example: Days passed.

Example: But then it happened.

10. A Short Question for Dramatic Effect

Example: What caused the change?