

## SENTENCE STRUCTURE (SYNTAX)

Syntax is sentence structure, including sentence length and patterns.

How a speaker or author constructs a sentence affects what the audience understands. The inverted order of an interrogative sentence cues the reader or listener to a question and creates a tension between speaker and listener. Similarly short sentences are often emphatic, passionate or flippant, whereas longer sentences suggest the writer's thoughtful response.

Describe the sentence structure by considering the following:

1. Examine the sentence length. Are the sentences *telegraphic* (shorter than 5 words in length), *short* (approximately 5 words in length), *medium* (approximately 18 words in length), or *long and involved* (30 words or more in length)? Does the sentence length fit the subject matter? What variety of lengths is present? Why is the sentence length effective?
2. Examine sentence beginnings. Is there a good variety or does a pattern emerge?
3. Examine the arrangement of ideas in a sentence. Are they set out in a special way for a purpose?
4. Examine the arrangement of ideas in a paragraph. Is there evidence of any pattern or structure?
5. Examine sentence patterns. Some elements to consider are listed below:

A *declarative (assertive) sentence* makes a statement: The king is sick.

An *imperative sentence* gives a command: Stand up.

An *interrogative sentence* asks a question: Is the king sick?

An *exclamatory sentence* makes an exclamation: The king is dead!

A *simple sentence* contains one subject and one verb: The singer bowed to her adoring audience.

A *compound sentence* contains two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or) or by a semicolon: The singer bowed to the audience, but she sang no encores.

A *complex sentence* contains an independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses: You said that you would tell the truth.

A *compound-complex sentence* contains two or more principal clauses and one or more subordinate clauses: You said that you would tell the truth; I trusted you, but I should have known better.

A *loose sentence* makes complete sense if brought to a close before the actual ending: The king is sick with a mild stomachache brought on by eating seasoned fries.

A *periodic sentence* makes sense only when the end of the sentence is reached: After eating seasoned fries, the king became ill.

In a *balanced sentence*, the phrases or clauses balance each other by virtue of their likeness of structure, meaning, or length: He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

*Natural order of a sentence* involves constructing a sentence so the subject comes before the predicate: Oranges grow in California.

*Inverted order of a sentence* (sentence inversion) involves constructing a sentence so the predicate comes before the subject: In California grow oranges.

\*This is a device in which normal sentence patterns are reversed to create an emphatic or rhythmic effect.

*Split order of a sentence* divides the predicate into two parts with the subject coming in the middle: In California oranges grow.

*Juxtaposition* is a poetic and rhetorical device in which normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another, creating an effect of surprise and wit: "The apparition of these faces in the crowd; Petals on a wet, black bough." (From "In a Station of the Metro" by Ezra Pound.)

*Parallel structure (parallelism)* refers to a grammatical or structural similarity between sentences or parts of a sentence. It involves an arrangement of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs so that elements of equal importance are equally developed and similarly phrased (i.e., putting parallel elements in parallel form):

He was walking, running, and jumping for joy.

The king ate seasoned fries, petals, and oranges; the queen ate only petals.

*Repetition* is a device in which words, sounds, and ideas are used more than once to enhance rhythm and create emphasis: "...government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." (From "Address at Gettysburg" by Abraham Lincoln.)

A *rhetorical question* is a question that expects no answer. It is used to draw attention to a point and is generally stronger than a direct statement: If Mr. Ferchoff is always fair, as you have said, why did he refuse to listen to Mrs. Baldwin's arguments?