

Lesson Title: Edit by Ear

Problem: Run-on sentences, sentence boundaries

Description of Lesson:

The teacher reads a trade book, excerpt, or article ignoring all ending punctuation in an expressionless voice. She follows up with a discussion about how the text “sounds” when punctuation is ignored. She then reads the text again with expression observing all ending punctuation. During the second reading, students will snap their fingers when periods are needed. Hopefully the students will conclude that ending punctuation does indeed make a difference.

Students will then read their own compositions (after having practiced several times) from the author’s chair and the other students will snap in places that periods should be inserted. Authors can defend their ending punctuation placements and ultimately edit their compositions for proper ending punctuation.

Lesson Title: Sentence Spice

Problem: Little variety in sentence structure

Description of Lesson:

Students will practice starting sentences in a variety of ways, including starting with a . . .

- **Noun:** Jeff practices basketball for hours a day.
- **Pronoun:** I play on varsity, so I have to be good.
- **Article:** The coach starts him every game.
- **Infinitive:** To win the game is Jeff’s ultimate goal.
- **Gerund:** Playing tonight’s game is no exception.
- **Adverb:** Quickly, Jeff flies down the court.
- **Adjective:** Purple jerseys scramble for the ball.
- **Participle Phrase:** Receiving the ball from center, Jeff scores.
- **Adverb Phrase:** While the crowd screams, Jeff runs.
- **Prepositional Phrase:** In the last three minutes, we won.

Students will select three sentences (or more for older kids) and rewrite them using three different sentence beginnings.

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Lesson Title:

Problem: Word choice

Description of Lesson:

*** Describe what you’re wearing such that someone would want to buy it***

Lesson Title: Send it Through the Strainer

Problem: Dull or ineffective dialogue

Description of Lesson:

Teacher will explain to students that dialogue is a conversation between two or more people. In fictional writing it is essential. In fact, dialogue brings the characters to life and adds interest to the story. But for dialogue to perform that function, it must do more than duplicate real speech. Real people have dull conversations like . . .

“Hi, how are you?”

“I’m fine. How about you?”

“I’m fine, but in a hurry.”

“See you later. I’m on my way to class.”

“Okay. Have a good day.”

Quality dialogue in fiction has been put through a strainer, and only the most interesting, most exciting, most emotional, and most dramatic words come through the strainer. Have students “strain” their dialogue so that only the best remains!

(Adapted from *Minilessons for Revision* by Susan Geye)

Lesson Title: The Face Behind the Paper

Problem: Weak voice

Description of Lesson:

NOTE: This mini-lesson works best with fantasy and/or third person writing.

Students will identify one of the main characters in their stories and create a mask out of a paper plate to represent the chosen character. Each student will then reread his/her composition to a partner changing the voice to enhance the character. As students attempt to mimic the voice of their characters, they become aware of other dialogue the characters might say and additional ways to bring the voice to life.

Students will then go back and make “voice-building” revisions based on their insights from role-playing.

NOTE: This mini-lesson should be modeled several times by the teacher before students are asked to do it on their own.

Lesson Title: “Body-build” your Verbs

Problem: Weak verbs, sentence structure variations

Description of Lesson:

Students will highlight or underline all verbs and verb structures in their drafts.

For example: “The day was shimmering hot.”

“Although the heat was unbearable, we continued the picnic.”

“The birthday girl was sad.”

Students will select several sentences (grade-level appropriate) with weak verbs/being verbs and rewrite to strengthen the sentences.

For example: “The shimmering sun beat down on us.”

“We continued the picnic despite the unbearable heat.”

“Sadness overcame the birthday girl.”

(Adapted from *Minilessons for Revision* by Susan Gey)

Lesson Title: Four Corners

Problem: Ending punctuation

Description of Lesson:

The teacher prepares and posts four poster boards in the four corners of the room. Each poster has the name of one of the four kinds of sentences (declarative, exclamatory, imperative, or interrogative) along with a gigantic symbol of its accompanying punctuation mark.

Students will write one sentence (either declarative, exclamatory, imperative, or interrogative) on a piece of paper with NO punctuation. They will then wad up the paper like a snowball and on a teacher-given signal, sentences are thrown across the room. Each student will then chose one “snowball,” read it, determine the kind of sentence that it is, punctuate it, and go to the appropriate corner/poster representing his/her sentence. Then students share their sentences and defend their reasoning. The teacher then guides discussion for potential changes in a sentence. Students participate in a “thumbs up; thumbs down” verification.

Lesson Title: Thread of Connectedness

Problem: Ideas not connected, lack of sentence-to-sentence progression

Description of Lesson:

Students will write a paragraph (with sentence-to-sentence progression) and literally link words/ideas within the paragraph. Using a colored marker, students will identify the controlling word in the first sentence, circle it, and search for the controlling word in the next sentence. If sentence-to-sentence progression is present, the two words will be linked in some way. If not, then sentence-to-sentence progression does not exist within that paragraph. Each subsequent sentence should have a link to the previous sentence. After all key words have been circled within sentences, connect the circled words by drawing a line to link them. That line serves as a “thread of connectedness”.

Example:

The dog looked mean. His yellowed teeth were exposed as a snarl crept through his rolled back lips. A low, frightening growl escaped his throat. He pulled on his collar in an attempt to attack the cat.

Lesson Title: “Can” Do

Problem: No understanding of concept of paragraphing or indentation

Description of Lesson:

In order to demonstrate the idea of making new paragraphs, show students a can of orange soda and a can of grape soda. Tell them, “**Orange soda is all you will ever find in an orange soda can**” and “**Grape soda is all you will ever find in a grape soda can.**” This concept is also true in writing; similar ideas are contained in one paragraph. To illustrate indentation, make a dent in the can. It now has an “**in-dent.**” So, all similar ideas or dialogue spoken by a character needs to be in one paragraph (container) with indentation. Have students revisit their own compositions to determine if the ideas contained in their paragraphs are related.

(Adapted from *Minilessons for Revision* by Susan Geye)

Lesson Title: End with your Strongest Line

Problem: Weak conclusion

Description of Lesson:

Have two other students read your paper and highlight the strongest line (or two). See if your paper makes sense with the strongest line(s) at the end.

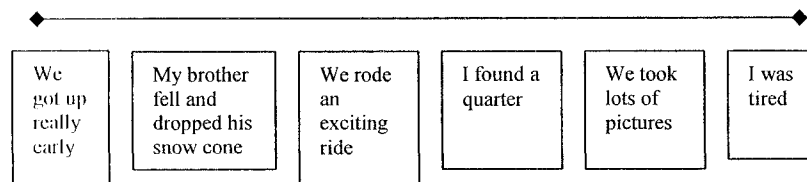
Lesson Title: Find your Focus

Problem: Focus (surrounding an event) is too broad

Description of Lesson:

Have students make a timeline of the events within the main event.

Example: Main Event: My Trip to Six Flags



Have students select only one of the above events for a focus for their writing in an effort to narrow the topic. The chosen event should be the one that will make for the most interesting composition. Then have students go back into their own writing to determine which event would make for the most engaging story.

Lesson Title: Lively Leads

Problem: Weak Introduction

Description of Lesson:

Students will decide on a more appropriate introduction after reviewing their papers - using one of these six techniques:

- Begin with details that pull the reader smack in the middle of a single moment. (*Ex: No one believed it was happening.*)
- Begin with a reflection, setting the reader up for the material to be covered. (*Ex: Around this time last year, I learned a big lesson.*)
- Begin with intriguing dialogue.
- Begin with an action.
- Begin with a pertinent quote and tie this quote into the thesis.
- If the story is a narrative, begin with a description of setting (sensory details).

NOTE: The introduction should not simply be a restatement of the prompt.

Lesson Title: The END

Problem: Weak Conclusion

Description of Lesson:

Through literature, introduce students to several choices for an ending:

- Splashy – big bang
- Funny
- Sad
- Small detail
- Surprise
- Circular
- Factual
- Quotation
- If story is a narrative, end with the resolution of the story

Have students write three different types of endings for their own essays and then pick the best closing.

NOTE: The words, “In conclusion” are not necessary.

Lesson Title: Picture Perfect

Problem: Lack of detail, needs elaboration, doesn't create a mental picture for the reader

Description of Lesson:

Select one of the following three sentences to develop by adding imagery (so that the reader can create a mental picture). Several sentences may be needed to thoroughly develop the thought.

- The *fight* at the school today was *unbelievable*.
- Those girls think they are *so good*.
- Our cafeteria food is *awful*.

CHALLENGE: Attempt to write the “showing” sentences without using the italicized words.

After practicing with the provided sentences, students will complete this lesson with three or four sentences from their own papers.

Lesson Title: Same Sentence; Different Structure

Problem: Little variety in sentence structure

Description of Lesson:

Students will practice rewriting/re-ordering the following sentence without losing the meaning and without changing too many words.

Sentence:

- The girl returned home and was tired from a day of horseback riding.

Other ways to write the same sentence:

- Tired from a day of horseback riding, the girl returned home.
- The girl returned home. She was tired from a day of horseback riding.
- Returning home, the girl was tired from a day of horseback riding.
- The girl, after a day of horseback riding, returned home and was tired.
- “I’m tired,” exclaimed the girl, when she returned home from a day of horseback riding.

After practicing with the provided sentence, students will complete this lesson with three or four sentences from their own papers.

Lesson Title: Charting your Sentences

Problem: Run-ons, weak sentence structure, fragments

Description of Lesson:

Students will take a piece of paper long-wise and then fold again to create columns. Then students will take ten sentences and fill in:

Sentence #	# of Words	First Four Words	Verb

Students will be analyzing the first ten sentences of their compositions. In the first column, simply number 1-10. In the second column, students will record the number of words in each sentence. In the third column, the students will record the first four words of each sentence, and in the fourth column, the verb from each sentence will be recorded. By completing this chart, students will be able to identify run-ons, determine repetitive sentence beginnings, and discover repeated words.

Lesson Title: Show, Don't Tell

Problem: Paper is a list of facts, writer does not paint a picture, underdeveloped ideas

Description of Lesson:

Students will take a piece of paper and a heard of each sentence, they place "T" or "S" to identify what the sentence is: telling sentence (T) or showing sentence (S), or both.

- Showing sentences appeal to the senses by allowing the reader to get a mental picture while reading.
- Telling sentences simply make a statement and serve to provide a storyline.

In an ideal world, there will be a balance between the two. Obviously, if the paper is mostly T's, then the student will need to revise to add some showing sentences.

Lesson Title: In the Bag

Problem: Paper is off topic, extraneous information

Description of Lesson:

Students should be taught that each paragraph (big idea) of their compositions is a main idea. They should think of a main idea as the “bag” of the story, and then look back at each paragraph, to see if everything (each sentence) belongs “in the bag.” If not, the writer should delete it.

NOTE: For visual, hands-on appeal, the teacher may model this by cutting a paragraph into sentences, drawing the sentences from a real paper bag, and determining as a class whether each sentence belongs “in the bag.”

Lesson Title: *Don't* Play it Again, Sam

Problem: Redundant word or phrase

Description of Lesson:

- Divide students into groups of two.
- One student will read his/her paper aloud to his/her partner in order to determine if words or phrases are repeated too frequently.
- Partners will discuss whether the repetition is for emphasis-sake or if the repetition is tiresome.
- If a repetitive word/phrase is problematic, students will work with their partners to come up with words/phrases that will replace the overused word/term and retain or enhance the meaning.

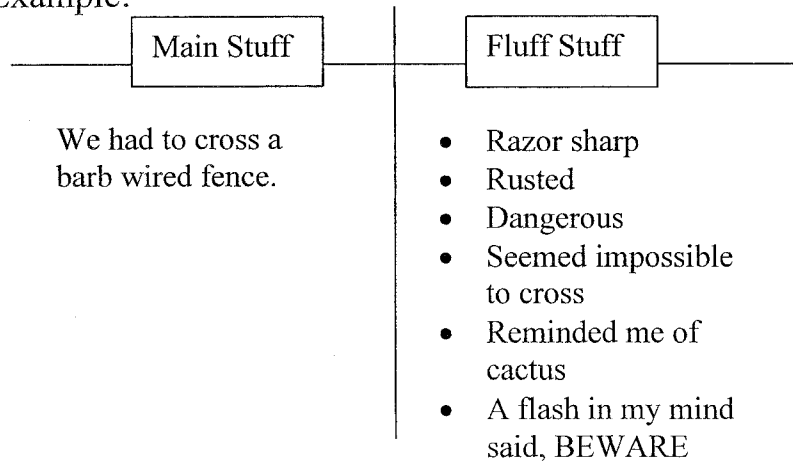
Lesson Title: Main Stuff / Fluff Stuff

Problem: Underdeveloped ideas

Description of Lesson:

Students will reread their compositions and highlight the main idea (main stuff) in each paragraph. Folding a clean sheet of paper length-wise, students will record the main idea sentences (main stuff) on the left side of the paper. On the right side, students will generate ideas which could be used to develop the main ideas (fluff stuff).

Example:



Students will then rewrite their paragraphs incorporating the fluff stuff.

Lesson Title: Post-it Heaven

Problem: Lack of details, underdeveloped ideas, lack of coherence

Description of Lesson:

For every undeveloped idea, students will have a post-it note. (Ex: “Another person’s achievements can inspire me to reach my goals.”) On the post-it note, students will develop the idea by answering questions such as . . . How? Which goals? How did they inspire you? Give me a specific example?

Students will then go back and stick the post-it notes in proper order to fully develop the idea(s) - making revisions based on responses.

*Can be done in peer editing or teacher/student conferencing.

Lesson Title: Find and Flourish

Problem: Slow down momentum of paper, identify and expound upon the main idea of a paragraph

Description of Lesson:

Students will find (and highlight) the main idea of an underdeveloped paragraph. On a separate sheet of paper, students will elaborate/add details to “flourish” the main idea. When completing the final draft of the paper, students will insert the exploded idea.

Lesson Title: Fuzzy to Focused

Problem: Lack of details

Description of Lesson:

Students will select a “fuzzy” sentence from their compositions. This sentence should be one in which the information is too general or contains no details at all; it does not convey a mental picture for the reader. Next, students will bring that sentence into focus by adding specific details, imagery, action, etc.

Example:

- The car was a mess. (fuzzy)
- The sleek black Ford Explorer was an eye-catcher upon first glance. However, opening the driver’s door was a visual disaster to the eyes. Big Mac containers were scattered everywhere! The pungent aroma of old grease assaulted the senses when the door was opened. Plastic cups which had once held anything from a soda to coffee were mixed with last week’s homework, an old pair of sneakers and a grass-stained soccer ball. (focused)

Lesson Title: Cut it Out

Problem: Repetition

Description of Lesson:

Students will re-read their papers and literally cut them into sentences using scissors. They will then reconstruct their papers omitting sentences or phrases that are repeated. Students will work to develop what is left so that their papers lose their repetitive nature.

Lesson Title: Five W's & and H

Problem: Gaps in information that cause the paper to be confusing

Description of Lesson:

Students will trade papers with partners to see if partners can answer standard questions:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?

Students will then go back and make revisions based on additional information from their partner's response.