

KQED Perspectives Unit Curriculum

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DRAFTING

Lesson 7: Sentence Variety

Objective:

- Students will understand and use a variety of ways to start sentences.

Estimated time: One 50-minute class period

Student writers often fall into the habit of beginning the majority of their sentences with the subject. Teaching a variety of sentence beginnings helps them to think about the flow of their essays.

I like to use individual white boards to teach this lesson, though pieces of paper will work, too.

Steps:

1. Everyone begins with the same simple sentence, but they will build on it in their own ways. To start, have students all write the same subject-verb sentence, the sillier the better. Example: The elephant sneezed.
2. Ask students to now change their sentence so that it begins with an adjective. Students may choose any adjective they like. Example: The enormous elephant sneezed.
3. Now students should begin their sentence with an adverb, but keep the adjective in the sentence. Example: Forcefully, the enormous elephant sneezed.
4. Now, students should begin the sentence with a prepositional phrase, keeping both the adverb and adjective in the sentence. Example: On the mouse, the enormous elephant sneezed forcefully.
5. From the last sentence, students can then rearrange their final sentence so that it still makes sense. Example: The enormous elephant forcefully sneezed on the mouse.

When students return to their essays, I have them look for at least three places where they can vary sentence structure. A great resource for teaching sentence variety is Kim's Korner For Teacher Talk:

<http://www.kimskorner4teachertalk.com/writing/sixtrait/sentencefluency/sentencebeginnings.html>.