The Art of Styling Sentences

20 Patterns for Success

Third Edition

Marie L. Waddell
Robert M. Esch
Roberta R. Walker

- Learn to master 20 basic sentence patterns
- Write clear, coherent, eloquent sentences
- Improve your style by studying examples of well-known writers
- This edition updated with timely new sentence examples

Barron's Educational Series, Inc.

BARRON'S

The Art of Styling Sentences

20 Patterns for Success

Third Edition

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Preface

The idea behind the twenty patterns—that students can learn to write by imitating patterns—grew out of our classroom experiences after we discovered that teaching by rules almost never will work but that teaching by patterns nearly always will. Actually, this approach is not a new one. The teaching of writing by the imitation of patterns goes back to the pedagogy of the Renaissance; it was a common practice in the schools of Elizabethan England; it was certainly a widespread method of teaching in America from colonial times until early in the twentieth century. Our literary history shows that most great stylists of English—Shakespeare, Bacon, Donne, Milton, Jefferson, Churchill—learned to create good sentences by imitating examples from earlier literary masters. Current novelists, popular essayists, and scholars in all fields, using as they do sentence patterns like the ones in CHAPTER 2 of this book, also reflect in their writing their debt to the past, to the early masters of English prose.

The validity of teaching by imitation, by patterns for sentence structure and punctuation, became evident as we watched our students improve their ability to write, once they had sentences to imitate. Like Topsy, this book "just growed." It grew with help from colleagues in our department; our students helped us learn just what patterns they needed most often to get style and variety in their writing; other teachers offered encouragement and helpful suggestions as our patterns increased from ten to the basic twenty. The book evolved still further as we presented these twenty patterns in an English journal, in a statewide meeting of college teachers, in numerous workshops, seminars, and classes for graduate teaching assistants planning to teach English composition.

In the years since *The Art of Styling Sentences* was originally published, we have seen much success with teaching writing by imitating or dissecting sentence patterns. This current edition brings more timely examples of the twenty basic patterns. In addition, we've included an expanded section stressing when to use a particular pattern, as well as new checkpoints and exercises, a more detailed section on punctuation with illustrations, plus a recent essay by Charles Kuralt.

Woven into the text are examples of how professional writers have used these patterns. At first, some of their sentences may seem intimidating; instructors must, therefore, carefully guide students in analyzing these unfamiliar structures that appear in familiar patterns. Some of the overblown sentences will give students a bit of fun in evaluating, and possibly even in

revising, the extravagant and melodramatic prose of a few of these professionals. We urge all to enjoy seeing authors carried away with analogies and other figurative devices.

This third edition encourages analysis of and experimentation with the same idea phrased differently. As students learn the patterns, they will make fewer errors and also master the conventions of grammar and punctuation. Much of the instruction from earlier editions, however, appears again, as it continues to work in helping explain the patterns to anyone writing both in and beyond the classroom, in a business or professional setting. We have been encouraged that an edition is now available even in Taiwan. We're hoping that students will find new ways of being playful or serious, dramatic or forceful as they write. Above all, we want them to take risks with patterns they've never tried before, to claim authority for their individual style, and to develop their own voice.

We want to thank Gail L. Mortimer, Director of Literature at the University of Texas at El Paso, for her detailed and painstaking critique of our work. She gave us numerous insights about style, organization, and content, even pointing out problems we had overlooked in previous editions. At Barron's, we have appreciated the gracious and professional guidance of our editor, Linda Turner, in preparing this new edition. We would also like to thank Ruth Flohn, copyeditor. We are particularly grateful for her astute and detailed commentary; her suggestions made good sense and strengthened our presentation. Mary Mc Carthy Waight, Desmond Kilkery, and other reviewers have offered excellent, realistic suggestions. As Mary Waight has said, "Teaching in this manner—through pattern imitation—is a little like teaching itself: the rewards are many." But Pete Hamill warns us, "Writing is the hardest work in the world not involving heavy lifting."

Roberta R. Walker
Robert M. Esch

EL PASO, TEXAS
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INTRODUCTION

Almost anyone can benefit by learning more about writing sentences. You don't have to be a student to benefit from this book; all you need is the desire to write well. And you must certainly want to create better sentences, or you would not be reading this page. If you know how to write good, basic sentences yet find that they still lack something, that they sound immature because they have no variety, no style, then this little book is for you.

But if you want to write better sentences, how do you go about doing it? The answer is simple. You learn to write better sentences just the way you learn almost every other skill: by imitating the examples of those who already have that skill. You probably have already discovered that it is easier to master anything—jumping hurdles, doing a swan dive, or playing the guitar—if you are willing to practice imitating a model. Nowhere is this principle more obvious than in writing. If you are willing to improve your writing skills by copying models of clear sentences, then the following five chapters will help you to master the skill of writing well, with grace and style.

The whole is the sum of its parts

CHAPTER 1 reviews briefly what constitutes a sentence. If you don't understand the functions of different parts of a sentence, you may need a supplementary book with a fuller discussion of sentence structure. This chapter briefly reviews the various parts of the sentence, utilizing the traditional terms you will find in the explanations of the patterns in CHAPTER 2. Analyze the sentences in CHAPTER 1 until you understand their various parts.

Skill comes from practice

CHAPTER 2, the heart of this book, contains twenty different sentence patterns, some with variations. Study the graphic picture of each pattern (the material in the numbered boxes) and notice the precise punctuation demanded for that pattern; you will then be able to imitate these different kinds of sentences. The explanation under each boxed pattern will further clarify HOW and WHEN you should use that particular pattern; the examples will give you models to imitate; the exercises will provide practice. With these as guides, try writing and revising until you master the skill of constructing better sentences.

As you revise, take some of your original sentences and rewrite them to fit a number of these patterns. This technique may at first seem too deliberate, too contrived an attempt at an artificial style. Some of the sentences you

create may not seem natural. But what may appear as mere artifice at first will ultimately be the means to greater ease in writing with flair and style.

Clear writing comes from rewriting

Your first draft of any communication—letter, theme, report, written or oral speech—will almost always need revision. When you first try to express ideas, you are mainly interested in capturing your elusive thoughts, in making them concrete enough on a sheet of paper for you to think about them. An important step in the writing process—in fact, where writing really begins—is revision, an on-going process. You must work deliberately to express your captured ideas in clear and graceful sentences.

Combinations lead to endless variety

CHAPTER 3 will show you how some of the basic twenty styling patterns in CHAPTER 2 can combine with other patterns. Study the examples given and described in CHAPTER 3; then let your imagination direct your own efforts at making effective combinations of the different patterns.

Analyze the sentences from professional writers to discover rhetorical subtleties and ways of achieving clarity, style, and variety.

Imagination is one cornerstone of style

CHAPTER 4 will show you how to express your thoughts in imaginative, figurative language. Study the pattern for each figure of speech described there, and then deliberately try to insert an occasional one—simile, metaphor, analogy, allusion, personification, hyperbole—into your own writing. Or you might experiment with an ironical tone. Try to be original; never merely echo some well-known, ready-made cliché. Create new images from your own experiences.

Understanding comes from analysis

CHAPTER 5 contains excerpts from the works of experienced writers who have incorporated in their paragraphs patterns like the ones described. Study the marginal notes that give the pattern numbers you have learned from studying CHAPTER 2. Then analyze something you are reading; discover for yourself how writers handle their sentences and their punctuation. Don't be afraid to imitate them when you write. You will, of course, find "patterns" (arrangements of words in sentences) that are not in CHAPTER 2 of this book. Imitate others as well as the twenty we present.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

Since this method of teaching students to write by imitation will be new to some instructors, we hope this section will offer helpful and practical suggestions. For the new teacher, we want to anticipate possible questions and provide some classroom guidelines; for the experienced teacher, we hope to offer a fresh approach to an old problem: getting students to write papers that are not dull and boring for them to write or for us to read. The following pages contain some hints for ways of teaching the material in CHAPTERS 1 and 2. Additional pages addressed to students also suggest valuable ways for the teacher to present the patterns and other techniques to a class.

Sentence combining

Concurrently with publication of the first edition of *The Art of Styling Sentences,* a number of researchers developed a teaching technique quite different from the "imitation" method described in this book. Sentence combining, introduced first by John Mellon and later developed in the work of Frank O'Hare, William Strong, Donald Daiker, and others, is the technique of deriving from a number of sentences, usually short, simple, kernel sentences, a pattern for combining them into one or two longer sentences. Through this type of practice the student develops syntactic maturity. The result of this method is effective skill building; students' sentences have greater variety, appear more mature and sophisticated, and illustrate how writers in the same class, working with the same kernels, are able to transform them into many different types of effective communication.

Suggestions for teaching CHAPTER 1

As we said in the introduction to the book, CHAPTER 1, "The Sentence," does not pretend to be a complete discussion of sentence structure. The English sentence took several centuries to develop and is, as Sir Winston Churchill said, a "noble thing" indeed. There are entire books dedicated to an explanation of it; hence our coverage is minimal.

The main thing to do with CHAPTER 1 is to review with your class the important "slots" in the standard sentence—subject, verb, object, complement, modifier, and connector. Be sure the students understand the terms and the functions of each. Give them some class practice in separating subjects from verbs in their current reading. It is sometimes easier for them to find the

essential skeleton of the sentence if first they cross out, or put in parentheses, all of the prepositional phrases (which are usually modifiers, anyway). Then let them discuss the differences between phrases and clauses, between independent and dependent structures, between declarative and imperative sentences. Never assume that students will be very adept at this kind of analysis. Guide them carefully with detailed explanations and many examples.

Suggestions for teaching CHAPTER 2—the patterns

CHAPTER 2, "The Twenty Patterns," is the heart of this book and contains enough material to keep your students busy throughout the semester as they incorporate the material into their compositions. Pace your discussions to fit your class; don't go faster than your students can master the techniques, and never try to cover more than three patterns in any one class period. Since there is a logical grouping and arrangement of the patterns, you may find it easier to go straight through from PATTERN 1 to PATTERN 20.

You will need to explain each of these patterns in great detail; you will also need to justify the rationale of the punctuation. Before you start with PATTERN 1, write some sentences on the board and review the sentence structure from CHAPTER 1. A good place to begin any kind of analysis is to have students put parentheses around all prepositional phrases, using anything from their current reading—a textbook, the sports page, an advertisement, lyrics of a popular song, or the label on a ketchup bottle, or a coke can! This is an effective exercise because prepositional phrases are nearly always modifiers and almost never a part of the basic sentence.

Now, with your class, create appropriate graphic symbols to use when you analyze and discuss sentences. For example, you can use a double bar (||) to separate subject and verb in independent clauses, or brackets to set off dependent clauses.

1. Draw one line under the main clause (in this case, the entire sentence):

   The atom bomb || exploded our old world and mushroomed us into a new age.

2. Dramatize what happens when there are two independent clauses in the same sentence:

   The atom bomb || shattered our old world (into smithereens); it || suddenly mushroomed us (into a completely new kind) (of world).

Draw a circle between the two independent clauses (which *could* be separate sentences); then explain that only four things can replace the circle:

a. a period, which would separate the clauses into two sentences;

b. a coordinating conjunction *(and, or, but, nor, for, so, yet)* preceded by a comma;

c. a semicolon, sometimes followed by a connective such as *therefore* or *however;*

d. a colon, but *only if* the second clause explains or extends the idea of the first.

3. Use brackets to set off a dependent clause, and clarify its function as PART of the independent clause; use a single bar to separate the subject and the verb in the dependent clause:

Marcie || bought [whatever she | wanted].
(noun clause used as direct object)

[What Tatum | needs] || is more discipline.
(noun clause used as subject)

The little children || played [where the fallen leaves | were deepest.]
(dependent adverbial clause)

4. Use a wavy line under an absolute phrase:

The war being over at last, the task (of arranging the peace terms) || began.

5. Use a circle around connectors and other nonfunctional terms.

Next, it might be fun to show that these constructions work even with nonsense words. Provide one or two examples, and then let students put their own creations on the board and explain them.

A bronsly sartian || swazzled (along the tentive clath).

Yesterday I || thrombled (down the nat-fleuzed beach) [where glorphs and mizzles | lay (in the sun)].

After this review, the class should be ready to tackle the first group of sentence patterns—the compounds. Each of them is really just two sentences in one, but you must make clear the vast differences that are possible. Now is the time to have the class really master the Checkpoints under PATTERN 3, which cover the differences in the three compounds.

For exercises beyond those that accompany the pattern explanations, consider these ideas:

1. Follow your discussion of particular patterns by asking students to write ten sentences of their own using the patterns you assign. Have students label each sentence with the number of the pattern in the **left** margin. *The advantage of this book is the control you have through the pattern numbers.* For subject matter students can draw upon their reading, hobbies, sports, and other interests. If for any given assignment the entire class uses the same topic or idea, have the students compare how many different arrangements of words can express the same idea, but each with slightly different emphasis or rhythm.

2. Use SENTENCE PATTERN 1, the compound with a semicolon and without a conjunction, to teach or to test vocabulary. In the first clause of the compound sentence have students USE and UNDERSCORE the given word; in the second clause have them DEFINE that word.

   EXAMPLE: Zen Buddhism is an *esoteric* philosophy; only the initiated really understand it.

   OR THIS VARIATION:

   The Greek root *chrono* means "time"; a chronometer measures time accurately. (See how much you can teach about punctuation in a sentence with this structure!)

3. Assign ten vocabulary words, each to be written in a different sentence pattern. Have students underscore the vocabulary word and label the pattern by number in the left margin. If students give the pattern number of the structure they are imitating, you can check the accuracy of their understanding of the pattern at the same time you are checking the vocabulary word.

4. Require students to have at least one different pattern in each paragraph of their compositions. Have them label each sentence by writing in the left margin the number of the pattern they are imitating. See "Marginalia: to encourage deliberate craftsmanship" (pp. xiv–xv) for more ways of encouraging students to analyze their writing as they improve their craftsmanship.

5. Have students collect interesting sentences from their reading and make a booklet of fifteen or twenty new and different patterns, with no more than two or three sentences plus analysis on each page.

They may simply copy sentences they find, or they may clip and paste them in their booklets, leaving room for a description (analysis) of each sentence in their own words.

6. Take a long, involved sentence from the assigned reading; have your students rewrite it several times using four or five different sentence patterns. (These revisions may have to contain some words that the original does not have.) Have students read these sentences aloud in class, commenting on the various effects thus achieved.
7. Point out the effectiveness of incorporating PATTERN 8 (the one with two or three dependent clauses) into a thesis or of using it to forecast main points in the introduction or to summarize in the conclusion.
8. Toward the end of the term, after they have mastered the patterns and know them by number, have students analyze some of their current reading, even from other courses. Have them write in the margin the numbers of the sentence patterns they find. (See CHAPTER 5 for two examples.)
9. Some of the example sentences for analysis are from professional writers; they are often convoluted and excessively detailed. Yet they can be springboards for discussion of such things as style, punctuation, sentence length, level and appropriateness of vocabulary, content, or even historical information.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

How to get the most from this book

The suggestions and exercises below may seem too simple or too artificial at first sight, but if you make a game of playing around with words, of fitting them to a formula, you will certainly learn how to write sentences that have flair and variety, and that is a skill worth developing. A well-constructed sentence is, like any artful design, the result of sound craftsmanship; it actually involves and requires:

a. good composing or construction
b. appropriate punctuation
c. a feeling for the rhythm of language
d. an understanding of idiom
e. clarity of expression
f. recognition of the power of rhetorical arrangement

If you are not in a composition class, but are working alone without a teacher's guidance, the suggestions below will help you to get the most out of this book, so follow them carefully. Don't be afraid to copy a pattern and fit your own words into it. Remember that every great craftsman begins as an apprentice imitating a master. By following the suggestions below and mastering the patterns, you will increase your skill in the art of styling sentences.

1. Study one pattern at a time. Write four or five sentences that follow that pattern exactly, especially the punctuation. Go through all twenty patterns in CHAPTER 2, taking only one at a time, until you are confident you understand the structure and the punctuation. Practice, practice—and more practice: this is the only way to learn.
2. In every paragraph you write, try to incorporate one or more of these patterns, especially when you find yourself tending to write "primer sentences," that is, short, simple sentences having the same kind of subject—verb structure. Deliberately keep trying to improve the quality and arrangement of all of your sentences, whether they follow one of these patterns or not.
3. Think of something you want to say and then practice writing it in three or four different ways, noticing the changes in effect and tone when you express the same idea with different patterns and

punctuation. You may not be aware of these changes when you read silently, so read aloud often to train your ear.

4. Analyze your reading material for eye-catching sentences, ones that you think have striking patterns you could imitate. (CHAPTER 5 shows you how.) Whether you are reading a newspaper, a magazine article, or a skillfully styled literary work, you will find many sentences so well written that you will want to analyze and then imitate. Underline them; learn the pattern. Or from your reading make a collection of sentences that you have especially enjoyed. Or keep a special notebook of new and different patterns that you want to copy. In short, look for unusual and effective sentences in everything you read and make a conscious effort to add those new patterns to the basic twenty in CHAPTER 2.
5. Use your computer and its software to practice brainstorming and to capture ideas. Save your drafts on a disk, as they may be useful later. Practice using Spellcheck, Thesaurus, and other functions as you edit. The computer will help you plan, delete, add, and rearrange as you write and revise.

Marginalia: to encourage deliberate craftsmanship

Analysis for themes

In every theme or paper you write there should be some goals, some design that you are trying to create. Marginalia can be a helpful guide for you, a way of checking up on what you are doing when you write. Marginalia, which, as the name implies, you write in the margin, will consist of words and symbols that indicate an analysis of your writing.

In early assignments, your instructor will probably be highly prescriptive. When you are told how many words, how many paragraphs, sometimes even how many sentences should occur within paragraphs, don't resent the detailed directions. Think about them as training in a skill. After all, athletic coaches and music instructors alike begin their training with strict regulations and drills, too. So follow all the "requirements."

Things to do

1. Highlight the topic sentence of each paragraph. Identify it by the label **TS** in the margin.
2. In the **left** margin of each paragraph, indicate the attempted pattern from the sentence patterns **(SP).** Mark in the margin **SP 6** or **SP 9a,** for example.

3. Indicate a pronoun reference pattern in one of the paragraphs by drawing a circle around each pronoun and an arrow pointing to its antecedent. Identify in margin as **PRO PATT.**
4. Circle transitional words in one paragraph ("echo" words, transitional connectives, conjunctions).
5. List in the margin the types of sentences in one paragraph; use a variety of simple **(S)**, complex **(CX)**, compound **(C)**, and compound complex **(CCX).**
6. When you master a new vocabulary word, underline it and label it **VOC.**

You might use a different color for each type of entry so that you can see at a glance whether you have incorporated all the techniques of good construction. These marks might seem distracting at first, but the results will be worth the distraction. A glance at the marginalia will indicate whether you understand the composition techniques being taught.

Why bother with all of this? Because it works. There is no better answer. You will come to realize that a theme must have a variety of sentences, that there must be transitional terms if the theme is to have coherence, that pronouns help eliminate needless repetition of the same word, that synonyms and figurative language give the theme more sparkle than you ever hoped for. Your instructors will like what they are reading; you will like what you are writing, and your grades will improve.

The following pages show two paragraphs written by a student. Note the marginal analysis and the effectiveness of the different sentence patterns.

A paragraph analyzing a simile in poetry

The Movement of Time

MARGINALIA

"Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore, So do our minutes hasten to their end . . . ."

—*William Shakespeare,* SONNET LX

TS

In the first two lines of Sonnet LX, Shakespeare uses a simile comparing the waves of the ocean to the minutes of our life: "Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore, / So do our minutes hasten to their

SP3

end . . . ." This line is inverted: that is, the subject "our

SP11

minutes" is in the second line, and the comparison "like as the waves" is in the first line. The simile says, in effect, that "the minutes of our lives are like the waves

VOC

on the shore." The waves role endlessly, inexorably

SP1

toward the shore of the ocean; the minutes of our lives hasten endlessly toward the end of our lives. This figure of speech gives an image of movement. We can almost

SP10

see time, like ocean waves, moving toward its destiny:

SP16

the end of life. Just as the waves end on the shore, so

SP3
VOC

too our life's minutes end in death. Some words in the simile have particular power: the word hasten conjures

a repeated SVO pattern

up a mental picture of rapid movement, of inexorable hurry toward some predestined end. The word towards suggests a straight, unerring path going without hesitation or pause to some goal. The waves move toward

repeated SP10

their goal: the shore. Our minutes move toward their goal: life's end. This simile is a very effective, picture-

PRO PATT

making figure of speech. It paints a mental picture of

SP9

movement and destiny. It suggests a very important fact

Repeat of keyword

about life, a fact we must remember. That fact is the truth expressed here beautifully by Shakespeare—life goes on forever toward its end, never slowing down or

Summary of TS with "echo" of quote

going back. Our lives do indeed "hasten to their end."

—Shawn Waddell

A paragraph defining a term

A Junk-man

MARGINALIA

TS
Order: General to Particular
SP4A
SP14
SP12
VOC
Metaphor
VOC
SP1
Contrast
SP9
Definition of TS
repeated word for coherence
Example
factual data
Contrast
VOC and two levels of diction
SP1
echo of TS for coherence

A junk-man in baseball is the most feared pitcher of all. Most batters go to the plate with the knowledge that the pitcher usually throws either curves or fastballs or knuckleballs in the clinch. From his view at the plate, a batter sees a curveball pitcher's curve starting off in a line seemingly headed straight for his head. Fortunately, just before making any painful contact, the ball seems to change its own mind, veering away to the opposite side of the plate. But after long and arduous practice, any batter can learn to anticipate or recognize a curve and be prepared for it. The same is true for a fastball that blurs its way into the catcher's mitt or for a knuckleball which seems to have trouble deciding where to go. A veteran batter can learn to sense the sometimes erratic path of either ball; he can feel some confidence when he has some idea of the pitcher's preferred ball. But he can be put completely off stride when he hears he has to face that most dreaded of all pitchers, a junk-man—dreaded because he can throw all pitches with equal effectiveness and surprise. This element of surprise coupled with variety makes the junk-man the most feared of all pitchers in baseball. For example, when Sam the Slugger goes to bat, he can feel more relaxed if he knows that Carl the Curve-man will probably throw curves about seventy-five percent of the time. The same is true for Sam when a well-known fastballer or knuckler is facing him from sixty feet away. On the contrary, Sam the Slugger loses his equanimity and is tied in knots when Joe the Junk-man grins wickedly across that short sixty feet from mound to plate; Sam has no way to anticipate what surprises may lurk behind that wicked grin when he faces the most feared pitcher in baseball.

—Shawn Waddell