

Poor: Too long and stringy

Do you know that if you want strong, healthy muscles, you must give your body a proper diet? Since muscle tissue consists primarily of protein, your diet should include protein-rich foods such as meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products....

Good: Varying sentence lengths

Do you want strong, healthy muscles? Give your body a proper diet. Since muscle tissue consists primarily of protein, your diet should include protein-rich foods such as meat, fish, eggs, and dairy products. Muscle contraction requires large amounts of energy. Foods rich in carbohydrates—fruits, vegetables, grains, and sugars—supply your body with this energy. Muscle contractions also occur only in the presence of calcium, so your diet must include calcium-rich foods like milk, milk products, and leafy green vegetables. Do not lightly esteem a wholesome diet; rather make sure that you give your body the nutrients it needs. On that diet depends your muscular health.

2. *Vary the word order in sentences.* Sentences have three kinds of word order. In normal or natural word order, the complete subject comes before the complete predicate. In inverted word order, the complete predicate comes before the complete subject. In mixed word order, part of the predicate comes before the subject and part of it comes after.

Normal: An eagle soared over the valley.

Inverted: Over the valley soared an eagle.

Mixed: Over the valley an eagle soared.

Use natural word order the most frequently because it is the most simple and direct. In almost every paragraph, though, several sentences should have mixed word order. And once in a while, write a sentence with inverted word order. Writing good sentences with inverted word order may take special effort, but this may add just the sparkle needed to transform a humdrum paragraph to an emphatic one.

Read again the last example paragraph above. The third sentence has mixed word order, and the last sentence has inverted word order. Do you see how these sentences contribute to the interest and effectiveness of the paragraph?

3. *Vary the beginnings of sentences.* Of course, if you vary the word order, you will automatically vary sentence beginnings. Below are five specific pointers for providing this kind of variety.

a. Begin with a single-word adverb, an adverb phrase, or an adverb clause. This naturally will produce a sentence with mixed word order.

Normal:

The tree fell to the ground with a great crash.

Begins with an adverb phrase:

With a great crash, the tree fell to the ground.