

How to use varied and correct sentence structures

Before you begin

What you need:

Related text: **“Powder” by Tobias Wolff**

Exit with Success and *The Bare Essentials Plus* (optional)

Approximate time this exercise should take you: **30 minutes**

Reminder

Using correct sentence structure is a very important part of expressing yourself well. You must always remember that when you are writing an essay, you should be using formal English. Writing for a specific purpose, such as writing about a literary text, is quite different from the English you might use in casual conversation. You are expected to write in complete sentences. Furthermore, strong writing uses sentences of differing lengths and levels of complexity while weak writing uses the same sentence pattern repeatedly and thus becomes monotonous. English Exit Exam graders will look for sentence variety (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex, and parallel structure sentences). You must also pay attention to your use of punctuation in order to maintain correct sentence structure.

Simple Sentence (also called an independent clause—simple subject and verb): Cranes are nearly extinct.

Compound Sentence (with conjunction): Cranes are nearly extinct, and they are protected by law.

Compound Sentence (with semi-colon): Cranes are nearly extinct; they are protected by law.

Complex Sentence (dependent clause joined to an independent clause): Because cranes are nearly extinct, they are protected by law

Compound-Complex Sentence (dependent clause joined to a compound sentence): Because cranes are nearly extinct, they are protected by law, but they are still shot by hunters.

Parallel Structure Sentence (parallel sequence/the same grammatical form): Cranes are nearly extinct, are protected by law, and are still shot by hunters.

Instructions

The following exercise has been designed to reinforce and test your understanding of the objective “varied and correct sentence structures.” It is keyed to Tobias Wolff’s short story “Powder.”

Exercise 3

SENTENCE COMBINING

Combine the following sentences into one or two longer sentences. You should leave out unnecessary words. In order to practise writing different kinds of sentences, try to vary your sentence construction in the exercise below. Refer to the **Reminder** section above for a quick reference. Also, remember to punctuate your sentences correctly!

Here is an example:

- a. Skiing is important to the story.
- b. It is a literal element in the story.
- c. It is a metaphorical technique in “Powder.”

Suggested revision: Skiing is important in “Powder” because it is both a literal and metaphorical element in the story.

1.
 - a. The son considers his father irresponsible.
 - b. The son experiences a change in attitude towards his father.
 - c. The excitement of driving through the forbidden territory is exhilarating.

- 2. a. The trooper forbids the father to drive down the road.
- b. The storm has created a dangerous situation.
- c. The father believes he must take the chance.

- 3. a. The narrator's father is very good at persuading others to allow him to do what he wants.
- b. The father sneaks his son into a nightclub.
- c. The father convinces his wife to allow him to bring his son skiing.
- d. He argues his way past the troopers at the end of the road.

- 4. a. The author draws a parallel between the father's driving and skiing.
- b. He says, "If you haven't driven fresh powder, you haven't driven."
- c. They are driving downhill.
- d. He says, "My father was breaking virgin snow between a line of tall trees."

- 5. a. He finally begins to enjoy himself.
- b. He is fed up with his father's wild ways.
- c. This boy is cautious.
- d. It becomes clear that they will get caught.

- 6. a. The author uses dialogue.
- b. Symbolism is used in the story.
- c. The setting is significant.

- 7. a. The father is adventurous.
- b. The father is exciting.
- c. The son is deliberate.
- d. The son is cautious.

- 8. a. He loves the jazz of Thelonious Monk.
- b. He owns an expensive sports car.
- c. The father is associated with spontaneity and vitality.
- d. He is full of confidence in his driving skills.

- 9. a. “Powder” is a story about adolescence.
- b. The point of view shifts between the adult and the adolescent character.

- 10. a. The son wants an honourable father.
- b. The son wants someone he can depend on.
- c. The son learns that strength is a virtue.
- d. Energy is important too.

Answer key

The following answers are suggestions, not the only possibilities.

1. Although he considers his father irresponsible, the son experiences a change in attitude towards his father because the excitement of driving through the forbidden territory is exhilarating.
2. Even though the storm has created a dangerous situation and the trooper forbids them to drive down the road, the father believes he must take the chance.
3. The narrator's father is very good at persuading others to allow him to do what he wants: he sneaks his son into a nightclub, convinces his wife to allow him to bring his son skiing and argues his way past the troopers at the end of the road.
4. The author draws a parallel between the father's driving and skiing. They are driving downhill, and he says, "My father was breaking virgin snow between a line of tall trees" and "If you haven't driven fresh powder, you haven't driven."
5. This boy is cautious and fed up with his father's wild ways, yet he finally begins to enjoy himself when it becomes clear that they will get caught.
6. Dialogue, symbolism and setting are used in the text.
7. The father is adventurous and exciting; the son is deliberate and cautious.
8. The father is associated with spontaneity and vitality as he loves the jazz of Thelonious Monk and confidently and expertly drives an expensive sports car.
9. Although the point of view shifts between the adult author and the adolescent main character, "Powder" is a story of adolescence.
10. The son wants an honourable and dependable father; however, he learns that strength and energy are important virtues, too.