Varying Sentence Patterns for Style

Name: _____	Date: _____	Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

Strong writers VARY their sentence patterns. Three useful moves: (1) combine short, choppy sentences into compound (with 'and,' 'but,' 'so') or complex sentences (with 'because,' 'when,' 'although'); (2) begin some sentences with an adverb, a prepositional phrase, or a subordinate clause instead of always starting with the subject; (3) mix short sentences (for impact) with longer ones (for description). Avoid repeating the same 'I + verb + object' pattern, and avoid run-on sentences even when adding variety. A well-crafted revision improves rhythm WITHOUT losing the original meaning.

PRACTICE

Choose the correct answer for each question.

1. Read the original. Which revision BEST combines the two sentences to add variety? ORIGINAL: 'I finished my homework. I went outside to play.'

- **A.** I finished my homework, I went outside to play.
- **B.** After I finished my homework, I went outside to play.
- **C.** I finished my homework and then after that I went outside to play.
- **D.** I finished my homework. Then I went outside to play.

2. Read the paragraph. Which version shows BETTER sentence variety? VERSION 1: 'The wind blew. The trees swayed. The leaves fell. The children ran inside.' VERSION 2: 'As the wind blew, the trees swayed and the leaves began to fall. The children ran inside.'

- **A.** Version 1, because shorter sentences are always clearer.
- **B.** Version 1, because each idea gets its own sentence.
- **C.** Version 2, because it combines related ideas and varies sentence length.
- **D.** Version 2, because it uses more vocabulary words.

3. Which revision adds the BEST variety by changing how the sentence begins? ORIGINAL: 'The team practiced for hours every day before the championship.'

- **A.** The team practiced and practiced for hours every day before the championship.
- **B.** Before the championship, the team practiced for hours every day.
- **C.** The team, before the championship, practiced for hours every day.
- **D.** Hours of practice every day were what the team did before the championship.

4. Which revision BEST varies the sentence pattern? ORIGINAL: 'I opened the door. I saw the puppy. I picked it up.'

A. I opened the door, I saw the puppy, I picked it up.

B. When I opened the door, I saw the puppy and picked it up.

C. I opened the door and I saw the puppy and I picked it up.

D. Opening the door and seeing the puppy I picked it up.

5. Which sentence uses a SHORT sentence effectively for impact in a longer paragraph?

A. The storm raged through the night with lightning splitting the sky and thunder shaking the windows.

B. The storm raged for hours. Lightning split the sky and thunder shook the windows for what felt like an eternity. Then silence.

C. The storm raged. The lightning split. The thunder shook. The silence came.

D. After raging for hours, with lightning splitting the sky and thunder shaking the windows, the storm finally ended in silence.

6. Which revision improves sentence variety WITHOUT losing the original meaning? ORIGINAL: 'The cat sat on the windowsill. The cat watched the birds. The cat twitched its tail.'

A. The cat sat on the windowsill, watched the birds, and twitched its tail.

B. The cat sat on the windowsill, the cat watched the birds, the cat twitched its tail.

C. The cat sat on the windowsill while watching the birds, dreaming of catching them someday.

D. On the windowsill the cat sat the cat watched the cat twitched.

7. Which revision BEST combines the sentences using a subordinate clause? ORIGINAL: 'The bell rang. The students rushed to their lockers.'

A. The bell rang, the students rushed to their lockers.

B. The bell rang and so the students rushed to their lockers.

C. When the bell rang, the students rushed to their lockers.

D. The bell rang; the students rushed; to their lockers.

8. A student wrote: 'I like soccer. I like basketball. I like swimming.' Which revision shows the BEST sentence variety?

A. I like soccer, I like basketball, I like swimming.

B. I like soccer and basketball and swimming.

C. Although I enjoy many sports, my three favorites are soccer, basketball, and swimming.

D. I like soccer. Also I like basketball. Also I like swimming.

9. Rewrite this monotonous paragraph to vary sentence patterns. Keep the meaning the same. ORIGINAL: 'Maya walked to the park. Maya saw her friends. Maya joined the game. Maya scored a goal.'

_____

_____

10. Write two sentences about a memorable meal. Make the first sentence LONG and descriptive, and the second sentence SHORT for impact.

_____

_____

Answer Keys

1	A	**B**	C	D	6	**A**	B	C	D
2	A	B	**C**	D	7	A	B	**C**	D
3	A	**B**	C	D	8	A	B	**C**	D
4	A	**B**	C	D	9	See below			
5	A	**B**	C	D	10	See below			

Explanations

1. B	B opens with a subordinate clause ('After I finished my homework') and follows with a main clause — the variety the prompt asks for. A is a comma splice (two complete sentences joined only by a comma). C is wordier but uses the same flat 'I-verb-object' pattern twice. D adds a transition word but still keeps two short, same-shaped sentences.
2. C	Version 2 uses a complex sentence to combine three related ideas, then ends with a short sentence for impact — that is the textbook definition of sentence variety. A and B are wrong because four identical short sentences create monotony, not clarity. D mentions vocabulary, but the question is about sentence structure.
3. B	B moves the prepositional phrase 'Before the championship' to the front, giving the sentence a fresh opening without changing meaning or length. A only repeats a word for emphasis. C interrupts the subject and verb with an awkward parenthetical. D turns the sentence into a stiff, passive-sounding construction that buries the action.
4. B	B opens with a subordinate clause and combines the last two actions with a compound verb — three different actions, one smooth sentence. A is a comma splice. C strings three independent clauses together with repeated 'and's, which is just as monotonous as the original. D drops a needed comma after the introductory participial phrase and reads as a run-on.
5. B	B mixes a medium opening sentence, a longer descriptive sentence, and a two-word sentence ('Then silence') that hits hard at the end — exactly how short sentences add impact when used sparingly. A is a single long sentence with no variety. C is four choppy sentences in a row — no rhythm. D buries the short impact moment inside one long sentence.
6. A	A keeps all three actions but joins them with a compound verb ('sat… watched… and twitched'), eliminating the repetition of 'The cat' three times. B is a comma splice. C adds 'dreaming of catching them' — a new idea the original did not contain — so it loses faithfulness to the meaning. D omits punctuation and reads as a run-on.
7. C	C uses the subordinating conjunction 'When' to create a complex sentence with a clear time relationship. A is a comma splice — two complete sentences joined only by a comma. B uses 'and so,' which is wordy and does not create a subordinate clause. D inserts a wrong semicolon and chops a prepositional phrase off from its verb.
8. C	C combines all three ideas inside a complex sentence that opens with a subordinate clause ('Although I enjoy many sports') and ends with a properly punctuated series — strong variety, same meaning. A is a comma splice. B strings the items with repeated 'and's instead of using a series. D simply adds 'Also' three times, preserving the same monotonous pattern.

9.	**Answer:** Sample answer: When Maya walked to the park, she saw her friends and joined the game. Moments later, she scored a goal. A strong revision uses at least two different sentence openings, combines related actions with compound verbs or subordinate clauses, and replaces the repeated subject 'Maya' with the pronoun 'she.' The sample opens with a 'When' clause, joins two actions with 'and,' and begins the next sentence with a prepositional phrase ('Moments later') for variety.
10.	**Answer:** Sample answer: The kitchen filled with the smell of garlic, simmering tomatoes, and freshly baked bread as my grandmother set the steaming plates on the table. It was perfect. Strong sentence variety mixes long and short sentences. The first sentence should be long with rich detail (here, multiple sensory images joined into one flowing sentence). The second should be short and punchy (two to four words) to deliver the emotional payoff. Any answer that follows this long-then-short pattern with consistent meaning is correct.

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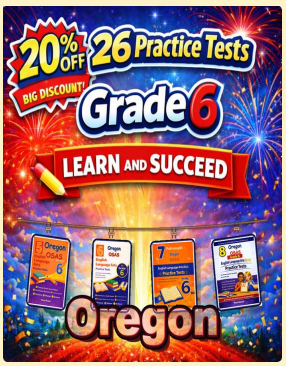

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