Sentence Strategies
Foundation Lesson

Skill Focus

Levels of Thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
<th>Create</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close Reading</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>Structural Elements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading Strategies
- Generalization

Sentence Variety
- Sentence Beginnings
- Sentence Combining

Structural Elements
- Body
- topic sentence
- use of commentary
- use of evidence

Organization
- Patterns (spatial, order of importance, chronological, etc.)
- Transitions

Style/Voice
- Conscious Manipulation of Sentence Patterns (9)
- Experimentation with Original Forms and Structures (7)
- Use of Figures of Speech

Lesson Introduction

When students first begin to express their thoughts in writing, composition can be a fairly random process without much rhyme or reason to it. As student writers mature, they can begin to think about using a conscious pattern or structure to organize their writing pieces and to work toward the accomplishment of a rhetorical purpose.

Rhetoric is language used as a tool of persuasion.

The term refers not only to diction, or word choice, which can have an emotional effect on readers and influence their attitudes toward the subject, but to syntax, as well – the deliberate arrangement of meaningful chunks of language for effect.

In the following writing activity, students will gain an awareness of the deliberate syntax choices a writer may make in order to accomplish a rhetorical purpose. Less experienced writers can be expected to write in simpler language; more experienced ones will use more sophisticated words and more complex sentence structures; however, all writers can learn how to use language purposefully and effectively and will gain some experience in doing so through this lesson.

Suggested time frame

Two-three class periods; the lesson works well when the students pair up for the activity.
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Have you ever thought about why sentences are arranged as they are? In the work of writers who craft their sentences as carefully as a sculptor chisels stone or as purposefully as a builder constructs a house, the arrangement of words and ideas in a sentence is as important as what words, phrases, and clauses are chosen to construct the sentence. Below are some possible strategies that a writer might use to craft a thoughtful sentence.

A. **Generalize**: All human beings have some faults.

B. **Summarize**: All four of the stories mentioned in the article are about exceptional children who face challenges and overcome them.

C. **Compare**: Orange juice is much sweeter than grapefruit juice.

D. **Contrast**: The last book we read was too short and simple; this one is much longer and more detailed.

E. Give **Cause and Effect**: If you bring only light clothing with you on your trip to the Antarctic, you will be very uncomfortable during your stay there.

F. Give an **Opinion**: Hockey is the most exciting sport.

G. **Define** Something: A sonnet is a very structured poem that has exactly fourteen lines.

H. Describe a **Procedure**: Grease the pan first, then knead the dough, place it in the pan, and let it rise in a warm place for at least an hour.

I. Pose a **Problem and Give Its Solution**: I need to lose weight, so I think I’ll go on a diet.

J. Construct a **Simile**: Joan has a face like a flower.

K. Construct a **Metaphor**: She’s a real peach of a girl.

L. Make a **List** or Give **Examples**: The toy store carried beautiful handmade dolls, finely crafted train sets, games from all over the world, and huge stuffed animals.
M. Construct a Bridge Between One Idea and Another: My friend John was just finishing his lunch as I arrived to pick him up for the basketball game. While he was wolfing down the last of his sandwich, I made conversation with his mother. Even though his mom was really nice, I was happy when John finally completed his meal and was ready to go. Notice how the transition sentence picks up elements of both the sentence that preceded and the sentence that follows it.

Try using these sentence strategies to construct paragraphs containing various logical patterns. Use the following patterns to practice, then try planning a paragraph with your own strategic mix of sentences.

Example Paragraph
I-J-H-M-A

I need to lose weight, so I think I’ll go on a diet. I look like an overstuffed turkey in my bathing suit. First, I’ll start working out in the gym three times a week and begin to count calories; then I’ll add a daily run, and finally, I’ll be ready to teach my own aerobics classes! Well, maybe teaching an aerobics class is a pretty unrealistic goal – after all, I’ve tried and failed to lose weight before. Losing weight is easy to plan, but hard to do.

Activity
Try the following patterns:
1. K-G-E-L-F
2. D-M-C-B
3. A-C-G-L-K
4. Try making up two paragraphs using your own patterns. Make sure that the content of all the sentences in your paragraphs is connected and that your paragraphs makes sense.