

Six Traits Writing Workshop

WNY School Support Center UB Buffalo Public Schools

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Sentence Fluency

Sentence Fluency

Sentence Fluency is the rhythm and beat of the language you hear in your head. Writing that's fluent is graceful, varied, rhythmic—almost musical. It's easy to read aloud. Sentences are well built. They move. They vary in structure and length. Each seems to flow right out of the one before.

Teaching the Trait of Sentence Fluency

- **Easy to read aloud**
- **Inviting, playful rhythms–cadence**
- **Well-built sentences**
- **Varied sentence length and structure**
- **Direct, concise structure in business writing**
- ✓ **Try to make one sentence grow out of the other**

Sentence Fluency Rubric



4

- 4 That's it! Smooth, rhythmic. It just flows along.**
- a. These sentences almost sing. It is very easy to read this paper aloud with lots of inflection (expression).
 - b. Some sentences are long and stretchy, some short and snappy.
 - c. Sentences beginnings vary and show how ideas connect with phrases like...*As a matter of fact, Next, On the other hand, Taking a closer look at the evidence, Looking at it from a different perspective, To cite another argument, In addition, etc.*
 - d. Excess baggage has been cut. These sentences are lean and clean.

Sentence Fluency Rubric



3

3 Almost there

- a. Here and there, I really like the way I strung words together. It's smooth—easy to read.
- b. These sentences are readable and clear, but wordy! I should cut some deadwood.
- c. I use some basic connecting phrases to show how ideas are linked.
- d. There is some variety in the length of my sentences.

Sentence Fluency Rubric



2

2 On my way–Ready for serious revision

- a. It's pretty easy to read aloud if you take your time, but I wish it sounded smoother in places.
- b. I've noticed something about my sentences. My sentences are all about the same length. Maybe I could combine some. Maybe I could shorten others.
- c. I could use some connecting phrases—*When this happened ... Later ... Another thing to consider... On the other hand ... for example...Nevertheless ... However*—to show how my ideas are linked.
- d. Many choppy tiny sentences make for a bump-bump-bumpy ride.

Sentence Fluency Rubric

1

1 Just Beginning

- a. This paper is hard to read aloud, even with practice.
- b. As I read, I find myself stopping, going back, re-checking the meaning.
- c. I'm having a hard time telling where one sentence ends and the next begins.
- d. Help! Some of these sentences don't make sense.
- e. I'd need to do a lot of oral editing (putting words in, taking words out) to make this clear for the reader.
- f. Everything is strung together in one endless "sentence."

Modeling Sentence Fluency

SENTENCE FLUENCY --

As you're teaching (or modeling composing, revising, or editing), read sentences aloud and try out different versions. See which plays to the ear best. 1.) The students were tired. They were tired from a long year of studying. They were ready for some fun. 2.) A long year of studying behind them, these students felt ready for fun.

Talk about and play with sentences with your students. Help create them and write them down, for drafting and revising or just for the fun of it. Either way, we show students that we value sentences.

Sentence Fluency Practice Exercise

Write in imitation of this model:

my daddy sings the blues

he plays it on his old guitar

my daddy sings the blues

and he plays it on his old guitar

he plucks it on the strings

and he sings about the way things are

Sentence Fluency Practice Exercise

Write in imitation of these sentences

As I got out of my car, engine and radio turned off, the first thing I noticed was not silence. It was anything but silent. Birds and bugs, chirps and whistles, and in the background low, grumbling thunder, heated and humidified. It was a muggy day and there were storm clouds to the south, but I didn't think they were a factor.

–Joe Thielman

Sentence Fluency Practice Exercise

Write in imitation of this model:

Hide and Seek

At last he would really show them.

He'd picked the very best place to hide. They'd all say he could play the game better than anyone. When they found him, they'd clap their hands.

The dopes. How dumb can they get? They should have looked here first! It's so obvious!

Here in the abandoned refrigerator.

Sentence Fluency

Sentence Fluency is the way words are connected within and between sentences.

Key Abilities:

- **Construct sentences**
- **Combine sentences**
- **Connect sentences**
- **Vary sentence openings**
- **Vary sentence length**

Sentence Fluency

Key Strategies:

- **Make sentences grow by adding to them to clarify and illustrate your meaning**
- **Make each sentence grow out of the one before**
- **Combine sentences**
- **Try for sentence rhythm**
- **Vary sentence structure and length**
- **Fix sentences that are choppy, incomplete, or rambling**

