

10 Ways to Liven Up Your Sentences

1. Spice up your sentence beginnings with prepositional phrases

Before – The dwarves covered their faces with black masks. The masks looked like vulture heads and had sharp beaks.

After – On the dwarves' faces were black masks that looked like vultures with sharp beaks.

2. Put a spin on openings with participial phrases (begin with verbs ending in –ing, –ed, –d, –n)

Before – The man in the black cape took off the hood and revealed his skull-like face.

After – Wearing a black cape, the man ripped off the hood and revealed his skull-like face.

3. Pick a participial phrase from within a sentence and move to beginning

Before – The gray clouds were gathered into a whirling mass. The gray clouds twisted into a funnel shape, raging across the sky.

After – Gathering in a whirling mass, the gray clouds twisted into a funnel shape and raged across the sky.

4. Catch those dangling participles (make sure your participial phrase is connected to the noun that follows or else the reader will be confused).

Before – Caught in the storm, the side of the road is where the man pulled over.

After – Caught in the storm, the man pulled over and parked on the side of the road.

5. Clarify details with subordinate clauses

Before – what students painted during art class

After – What students painted during art class, the teacher displayed in the school library.
Parents enjoyed seeing what students painted during art class.

6. Capitalize on clauses to brighten up sentence beginnings

Before – Jamal stepped inside the haunted house. Jamal heard screams and groans.

After – As soon as Jamal stepped into the haunted house, he heard screams and groans.

7. Add clauses within sentences for clarity and cadence

Before – The astronaut trained.

After – The astronaut trained until every muscle in his body ached.

8. Accentuate the appositives (a noun that adds detail to preceding noun) to sharpen images

Before – The shark swam near the surface.

After – The shark, a predator seeking blood, swam near the surface.

9. Stir reader's imaginations with absolutes (a noun followed by the present (-ing) verb or past participle (usually ending in -ed, -d, -n, -en) verb)

Before – The driver passed the red convertible.

After – Mind racing, frustration developing, the driver passed the red convertible.

10. Combine sentences with conjunctions for smoother prose

Before – Chris and I went fishing. We went fishing in the pond in Chris's cow pasture.

After – Chris and I went fishing in the pond in Chris's cow pasture.