

Using Compound Elements

If you ate your favorite kind of sandwich for lunch every day, you'd probably tire of it rapidly. No matter how good something tastes or how much you like it, you want some variety. The same principle applies to writing. If your writing style never varies, it quickly becomes boring. You can make sure that your writing is always fresh and interesting by varying sentence structure.

The most common beginning for a sentence is a subject followed by a verb.

Monica left for the trip with a twenty-pound backpack and her cocker spaniel.

The Homecoming dance was scheduled for October 16.

This word order is clear and precise, but constant repetition of the subject-verb pattern is too much of a good thing. Adding introductory words, phrases, and clauses to sentence beginnings will keep your writing style varied and engaging.

Basic:	Joe took matters into his own hands imperturbably.
Varied:	Imperturbably, Joe took matters into his own hands.
Basic:	We saw the remains of a chicken coop in the backyard of the old house.
Varied:	In the backyard of the old house, we saw the remains of a chicken coop.
Basic:	The tennis team sponsored a picnic to welcome new members.
Varied:	To welcome new members, the tennis team sponsored a picnic.
Basic:	Our cat had to endure many baths after she challenged a skunk.
Varied:	After she challenged a skunk, our cat had to endure many baths.

DIRECTIONS Combine each set of the following sentences in two different ways, varying the beginnings of sentences.

EXAMPLE	It was the second time this week. The dog had eaten her homework. Marty was furious.
	a. For the second time this week, the dog had eaten her homework, and Marty was furious.
	b. Because the dog had eaten her homework for the second time this week, Marty was furious



1. Hurricane Gabe struck the coast more ferociously than any storm in recent memory. The howling winds forced torrential rain through the streets.

a. _____

b. _____

2. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued during the Civil War. It did not end slavery. Slavery was banned throughout the United States only after the war.

a. _____

b. _____

3. The last game of the season was a terrible disappointment. It went to eleven innings before the Hornets won and saddened our supporters.

a. _____

b. _____

4. Colonists dumped tea into Boston Harbor. They were angry about a tea tax. This was only the beginning of a violent reaction against taxation without representation.

a. _____

b. _____

5. We finished tracing the computation error in our science experiment. It was much more difficult than we had thought it would be. We were exhausted.

a. _____

b. _____

Using Compound Elements

Answer Key

Answer Keys:

Answers will vary. These are sample answers.

1. a. More ferociously than any storm in recent memory, Hurricane Gabe hit the coast; the howling winds forced torrential rain through the streets.

b. With howling winds forcing torrential rain through the streets, Hurricane Gabe struck the coast more ferociously than any storm in recent memory.

2. a. The Emancipation Proclamation, issued during the Civil War, did not end slavery; only after the war was slavery banned throughout the United States.

b. Issued during the Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation did not end slavery; slavery was banned throughout the United States only after the war.

3. a. The last game of the season, a terrible disappointment, went to eleven innings before the Hornets won and saddened our supporters.

b. Going to eleven innings before the Hornets won, the last game of the season was a terrible disappointment and saddened our supporters.

4. a. Colonists dumped tea into Boston Harbor because they were angry about a tea tax; this was only the beginning of a violent reaction against taxation without representation.

b. Angry about a tea tax, colonists dumped tea into Boston Harbor, beginning a violent reaction against taxation without representation.

5. a. Exhausted, we finished tracing the computation error in our science experiment; it was much more difficult than we thought it would be.

b. Although it was much more difficult than we thought it would be and we were exhausted, we finished tracing the computation error in our science experiment.