

Sentence Length & Tension

Using Short Sentences

Varying sentence length is important for making your writing feel alive. Writing with sentences all the same length can be boring for the reader.

Short sentences can...

- Draw attention to dramatic moments.
- Create a feeling of panic.

Long sentences can...

- Make time feel slow and events feel relaxed.
- Provide descriptive details.

The following passages have overused longer sentences. Rewrite each, using some short sentences (or sentence fragments) to help express more intense action.

1. Wade looked out the window to the pavement below. Wade knew there was no other option and that he had to jump. He took a deep breath and placed one foot on the ledge, followed by the other. Summoning all his courage, Wade pushed off the ledge and leapt as far as he could.

2. All of a sudden, Rick heard barking behind him and turned around. He froze as a large, menacing dog approached. Its mouth snarled and its teeth bared, and Rick was certain the animal wanted to attack him. Rick spun around and began running away from the dangerous creature. He could feel its hot breath on the back of his neck as it chased after him.

3. Ellie burst out the front door and sprinted down the street towards the train station, checking her watch as she ran. She saw that she had less than a minute before the train would depart. Ellie ran faster and faster, rounding one corner and then another.
