

Ideas for Radical Revisions

Adding SENTENCE VARIETY with RATIOCINATION

[Ratiocination is a revision strategy that enables students to manipulate sentences, avoid repetition and clarify ideas through a process of finding and coding grammatical clues.]

Before Ratiocination:

There are three things I carry with me in my life. My basketball, my memories of my dog and my sense of humor are probably the things that define me most. The people who know me best will say these are the things that make me who I am.

The girl I sat next to in the fifth grade always smelled funny. I used to make faces at my friends whenever the girl got up to sharpen her pencil. I would hold my nose and whisper “pee-uuu.” Then one day I found out the reason she smelled so weird and I felt horrible about my behavior.

After Ratiocination:

1. Use a Prepositional Phrase

A prepositional phrase is a phrase that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun. A prepositional phrase may be used as an adjective phrase or an adverb phrase. Use a prepositional phrase to add more description to your nouns or pronouns.

Throughout my life, my basketball, my memories of Charlie and my invincible sense of humor are probably the “things” I have valued and continue to value most.

Underneath every individual’s outside appearance is a person with the same feelings of hurt, sadness, and despair we all feel from time to time. I never knew how true this statement is until I learned the reason “Janey,” the girl I sat next to in fifth grade, smelled so differently from me.

Examples of Prepositions:

Aboard	At	Down	Off	Under	So
About	Before	During	On	Underneath	Inside
Above	Behind	Except	Over	Until	Unlike
Across	Below	For	Past	Up	Outside
After	Beneath	From	Since	Upon	
Against	Beside	In	Through	With	
Along	Between	Into	Throughout	Within	
Among	Beyond	Like	To	Without	
Around	By	Of	Toward	Near	

2. Adverb Clause (phrase)

When a prepositional phrase modifies (describes) a verb, an adjective or an adverb it is considered an adverb clause (phrase). It answers the question: Where? How? How Many? or To What Extent? Use an adverb clause to set the scene, show time, and draw your reader in.

While I sit and ponder what makes me me, my mind circles around last night's basketball game and I am reminded about the role basketball serves in my life.

*Nearly every student in my fifth grade class enjoyed making fun of Janey. **Regretfully**, I was probably the ring leader. **After** learning the reason for Janey's offensive odor, I changed my opinion of her and tried everyday afterward to make up for my disgusting behavior.*

Examples of Adverbs

Here	Inside	Soon	Slowly	Seldom	Almost
There	Now	Clearly	Never	Very	So
Away	Then	Easily	Always	Quite	Really
Up	later	Quietly	Often	Too	Not

3. Participial Phrase

A participial phrase is a **group** of related words that contains a participle (think “ing” words) and that acts as an adjective. Give immediate movement to your sentences by choosing to use a participial phrase at the beginning of your sentences. Remember to always use a comma to separate the participial phrase from the rest of the sentence.

Traveling with me through life are the memories of my trusty dog, Charlie, my love for basketball and my invincible sense of humor.

Thinking back on my behavior in fifth grade, I often wonder how I could have treated a fellow human being so cruelly.

4. Adjectives

Adjectives modify nouns. Instead of routinely using a noun or pronoun at the beginning of your sentences, try using an adjective or two.

Golden, fluffy fur and sweet, gentle eyes are both images of Charlie, my trusty dog, that travel with me through my life.

Putrid, pungent odors only told part of Janey's story. If I had taken the time to look into her sweet, sad eyes, I may have learned the rest.

5. Modifiers After the Word Modified

Use this technique at the beginning or in the middle of your sentence to vary the structure. Instead of placing the adjectives or adverbs before the noun, try placing them after the noun.

Change: No one could stop himself or herself from petting Charlie's golden, fluffy fur.

To: *Charlie's fur, golden and fluffy, attracted everyone's hands for petting and loving.*

Change: I never noticed Janey's sad, sweet eyes. I only noticed the strong unclean odor of her clothes and hair.

To: *Janey's eyes, sad and sweet, were disguised for too long by the strong unclean odor of her clothes and hair.*