

Sentence Fluency

Sentence fluency is the rhythm and beat of the language. You hear it in your head. It's how the text plays to the ear, not just to the eye. Writing that is 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. Strong sentence fluency is marked by logic, creative phrasing, parallel construction, alliteration, and word order that makes interpretive reading feel simple and natural. To assess your work for fluency, read it ALOUD, then check the scoring guide that follows.

1 Just beginning

- ☐ This paper is hard to read aloud, even with practice.
- ☐ As I read, I find myself stopping, going back, rechecking the meaning.
- ☐ I'm having a hard time telling where one sentence ends and the next begins.
- ☐ Help! Some of these sentences don't make sense.
- ☐ All my sentences begin with the same two or three words.
- ☐ I've got a problem! Either (1) everything is strung together in one endless "sentence," OR (2) many choppy tiny sentences make for a bump-bump-bumpy ride.
- ☐ I'd need to do a lot of oral editing (putting words in, taking words out) to make this clear for a reader.

3 On my way - - ready for serious revision

- ☐ It's pretty easy to read aloud if you take your time, but I wish it sounded smoother in places.
- ☐ 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.
- ☐ 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 ideas are linked.
- ☐ These sentences are readable and clear, but wordy! I should cut some deadwood.
- ☐ Here and there, I really like the way I strung words together. It's smooth—easy to read.

5 That's it! Smooth, rhythmic, easy to read. It just flows along.

- ☐ These sentences almost sing. It is very easy to read this paper aloud with lots of inflection (expression).
- ☐ Some sentences are long and stretchy, some short and snappy.
- ☐ Sentence 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.
- ☐ Excess baggage has been cut. These sentences are lean and clean.