

Sentence Fluency
Patterns #'s 3 & 4

Pattern #3 Compound sentence with explanatory statement
(clauses separated by a colon)

General statement (idea) : specific statement (example)
(independent clause) (independent clause)

Explanation - This pattern is exactly like #'s 1 & 2 in structure: it is a compound; but it is very different in content, as the colon implies. A colon in a compound sentence performs a special function: it signals to the reader that something important or explanatory will follow (as this very sentence illustrates). In this particular pattern, the colon signals that the second clause will specifically explain or expand some idea expressed only vaguely in the first clause.

The first statement will contain a word or an idea that needs explaining; the second statement will give some specific information or example about that idea.

When to use this pattern – A whole clause receives special emphasis in this sentence. Use it when you want the second part of the sentence to explain the first part, give an example, or provide an answer to an implied question.

Examples - Darwin's *Origin of Species* forcibly states a harsh truth: only the fittest survive.

The empty coffin in the center of the crypt had a single horrifying meaning: Dracula had left his tomb.

Remember what the old saying prudently advises: Be careful what you wish for because you may actually get it.

Note – Capitalizing the first word after the colon is a matter of style and taste. Either way is acceptable; however, a writer should be consistent throughout a single composition.

Pattern #4 A series without a conjunction
(A series in any part of the sentence)

Explanation – A series is three or more similar items, all of which go in the same slot in the sentence. All items in the series must be similar in form (ie all nouns, or verbs) because they have the same grammatical function.

This pattern is the simplest form of the series. The items are separated by commas, and in this special pattern no conjunction links the final two items. Omitting this conjunction is effective. It gives your sentence a quick, staccato sound. Develop your ear!

When to use this pattern – A series is a good way to eliminate wordiness. If, for example, you have three short sentences, you may be able to reduce them to a single sentence with a series in it. If you are listing or giving several examples, try series structures to provide details.

Examples - The coach is loud, profane, demonstrative; he has again been trapped, caught, humiliated.

The United States has a government of the people, by the people, for the people.

Pattern #4a – A series with a variation

Explanation- Occasionally, you will want to vary the preceding pattern (#4) and instead write a series with conjunctions between all items (but usually not more than three). Again, try to develop your own ear. Listen to how this pattern develops a “flow” and rhythm.

Examples- Peering down from the hill, Merlin could see the castle swathed in gloom and fear and death.

Collies and geese and children tumbled out of the farmhouses in Alsace Lorraine, barking or hissing or shouting according to their unique natures.

Many hockey games lead to broken ribs or sprained knees or dislocated shoulders – or even worse.