

**Sentence Fluency
Patterns #'s 9 & 9a**

Pattern #9 – Repetition of a Key Term

S V key term -- or , repeated key term
(use dash or comma before repetition)

Explanation – This pattern uses repetition of a key word in a modifying phrase attached to the main clause. You may repeat the word exactly as it is, or you may change its form: *brute* may become *brutal*; *breath* may become *breathtaking*; *battle* may become *battling*

A key term is a word important enough to be repeated. It can come anywhere in the sentence, but the **repetition is most common toward the end**. Or, if you have a key word in the subject slot, the repetition may be, for example a part of an interrupting modifier.

You may also vary this pattern slightly using a dash instead of a comma; remember that a dash suggests a longer pause, a greater break in thought than the comma permits.

Note 1 – Be sure the word is worthy of repetition. Notice how ineffective the following sentence is, all due to the repetition of an uninteresting, overworked word:

He was a good father, providing a good home for his good children.

Note 2 – Be sure that the attached phrase with the repeated key term is NOT a complete sentence; if it is, you will create a comma splice. And that's a no-no.

He was a cruel brute of a man, he was brutal to his family and even more brutal to his friends.

Examples:

We all inhabit a mysterious world –the inner world, the world of the mind.

Neither the warning of the tarot cards –an ominous warning about the dangers of air flight—nor the one on her ouija board could deter Marsha from volunteering for the space shuttle mission.

Looking into the cottage, we saw great splotches of blood smeared on the walls, walls that only that morning had rung with shouts of joy and merriment.

“Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never—in nothing great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense.” - Winston Churchill

“Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival.” - Winston Churchill

Checkpoint – The repetition is in a phrase, not a clause. In this pattern, the words following the dash or comma **MUST NOT HAVE A SUBJECT OR A VERB** with the repeated word; the result would be a comma splice, and that’s a no-no.

Wrong: He was part of the older generation, his generation was born before the Depression.

Much Better: He was part of the older generation, a generation born before the Depression.

A frequent error occurs when there is a period or semicolon where the comma or dash should be, thereby creating a fragment out of the modifier containing the repeated key term.

Wrong: He praises the beauty of his love. A love that is unfortunately hopeless because it is not mutual.

This example contains the “pattern” of a very common fragment error:

S V . S + [dependent clause] but NO verb

Much better: He praises the beauty of his love. A love unfortunately hopeless because it is not mutual.

Pattern #9a Same Word repeated in Parallel Structure

S V repeated key word in same position of the sentence

Explanation – Repetition of words may occur in many ways.

- 1) You may repeat effective adjectives or adverbs in phrases or clauses with parallel construction:

The South Pacific island is an *isolated* community, *isolated* from the values of the West, *isolated* from the spiritual heritage of the East.

- 2) You may repeat the same preposition in a series:

All revolutionists are negative; they are *against* things—*against* the values of the present and *against* the traditions of the past, *against* materialism and *against* mysticism, *against* taxation and representation and legislation.

- 3) You may repeat the same noun as the object of different prepositions:

This government is of the *people*, by the *people*, and for the *people*.

- 4) You may repeat the same modifying word in phrases that begin with different prepositions:

Sidney devoted his life to those *selfish* people, for their *selfish* cause, but clearly with his own *selfish* motives dominating his every action.

- 5) You may repeat the same intensifiers:

Audrey appeared *very* chic, *very* classic, *very* bored.

- 6) You may repeat the same verb or alternative forms of the same word:

“It isn’t always others who enslave us. Sometimes we let circumstances enslave us; sometimes we let routine enslave us; sometimes with weak wills, we enslave ourselves.” - Richard Evans