

Timed Writing 3

Word Choice

In this textbook chapter on descriptive writing, you learned about the importance of word choice. This writing skill should be kept in mind as you write under time constraints. Because timed writing often does not allow the comfort of access to a thesaurus or ample time for revision, this skill needs to be automatic in order to have a significant benefit.

Automaticity comes from practice. Whenever you practice incorporating new vocabulary into your drafted writing, you are steadily gaining new words that you will have access to when writing under a time limit. In fact, this skill does not only strengthen through active use of new words in drafted essays. When you read and listen with the intention of recognizing and learning new words and phrases, you can also expand your vocabulary. Sometimes these words and phrases can enter your vocabulary without intentional practice due to repeated exposure to them in context. In other words, automaticity of word choice is a skill you build just by practicing English as much as possible.

Sentence Variation

Variety not only improves writing by including more descriptive and specific words and phrases. Even sentence structure choices can have an impact on the clarity of your ideas and the continued interest of a reader. There isn't a "better" or "best" grammatical structure for a sentence. Focus on learning how to use each type to best present your ideas. A more advanced writer does not over-rely on one type.

Like word choice, sentence variation will become natural for you over time as you write more. It will also be strengthened as you hear and read how others structure their ideas.

A **simple sentence** has just one independent clause (subject + verb). It is one complete idea.

- Mother Teresa was a great woman.

Compound sentences have two independent clauses. This means that there are two separate and complete ideas that are combined using a connector word (also known as a *compound conjunction* or *FANBOYS*; ex. for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

- Mother Teresa was a great woman, and she had a significant impact on the world.

The third would be a **complex sentence** which has one independent clause and one (or more) dependent clause. The dependent clause is incomplete without the inclusion of an independent clause. You may have learned these in grammar class with a different names (such as *time clause*, *conditionals*, or *subordinating conjunctions*).

- Although she initially had no money to support her work, Mother Teresa dedicated her life to serving the poor.

Finally, you can have a **compound-complex sentence** these sentences have both a compound conjunction and a subordinating conjunction.

- Mother Teresa dedicated her life to serving the poor even though she initially had no money to support her work, and this example is a reminder to help others regardless of our personal situation.

Revising for Variation

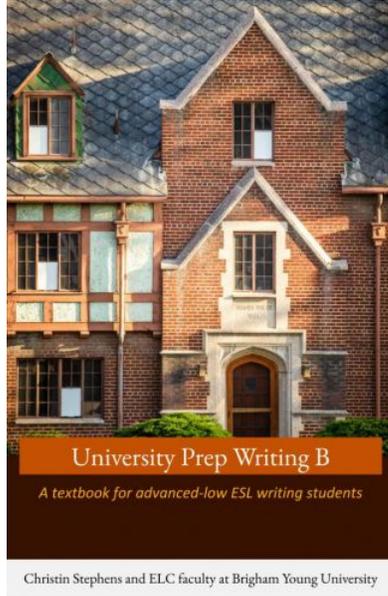
Although these skills will find their way into your writing naturally, your revision time is perfect for checking for variety. During a timed writing situation, you should always reserve some time to check your work before submitting. In this practice, you will focus on using that revision to look for words that are: repetitive, imprecise, basic, or weak. Additionally, you will revise by looking at grammatical structure of sentence to create a more interesting rhythm of ideas and restructure for clarity.

Exercises

Exercise 1: Timed Writing (Revision Focus)

For this timed writing practice, you will have 20 minutes to write on the topic. At the 20-minute timer, you will begin your revision time. You will have 5 minutes to revise for word choice and 5 minutes to revise for sentence variation.

1. A friend from your hometown is considering coming to study at the ELC but would like to know more about the experience first. Describe your experience at the ELC in detail.
2. One of your classmates is applying for a job. The job requires at least one character reference* and your classmate has asked you to write it. Describe the positive qualities and characteristics of your classmate to this potential employer.
3. The ELC administration has sent you a survey. The purpose of the survey is to help train teachers to be more effective. One question on the survey is a short answer (1-2 paragraphs) asking you to describe a good writing teacher. Using details from the writing classes you have taken and your own personal preferences, describe what makes a writing teacher effective.



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