

Varying Sentence Length

A way to spot sentence variety is through the length of each sentence.

Repeating longer sentences can inundate a reader and overshadow arguments, while frequently **relying on shorter sentences** can make an argument feel rushed or stunted.

Overusing Long Sentences

“The company reported that yearly profit growth, which had steadily increased by more than 7% since 1989, had stabilised in 2009 with a 0% comp, and in 2010, the year they launched the OWN project, actually decreased from the previous year by 2%. This announcement stunned Wall Street analysts, but with the overall decrease in similar company profit growth worldwide, as reported by Author (Year) in his article detailing the company’s history, the company’s announcement aligns with industry trends and future industry predictions.”

Notice how this paragraph is comprised of just two sentences. While each clause does provide relevant information, the **reader may have difficulty identifying the subject and purpose of the whole paragraph.**

Overusing Short Sentences

“In 2010, the company’s yearly profit growth decreased from the previous year by 2%. This was the year they launched the OWN project. The profit growth had steadily increased by more than 7% since 1989. (They stabilized in 2009.) This announcement stunned Wall Street analysts. However, it aligns with the decrease in similar company profit growth worldwide. It also supports future predictions for the industry (Author, Year).”

Notice how this paragraph uses the same information as the previous one but breaks it into **seven sentences**. While the information is more digestible through these shorter sentences, **the reader may not know what information is the most relevant to the paragraph’s purpose.**

Alternating Sentence Length

Alternating between lengths allows writers to **use sentences strategically, emphasising important points through short sentences and telling stories with longer ones:**

“The company reported that profit growth stabilised in 2009, though it had steadily increased by more than 7% since 1989. In 2010, the year they launched the OWN project, company profit growth decreased from the previous year. This announcement stunned Wall Street analysts. According to Author (Year), however, this decrease was an example of a trend across similar company profit growth worldwide; it also supports future predictions for the industry.”