

**NARRATOR:** Sentence variety. Short, choppy sentences are repetitive and dull. Sentences that use punctuation and structure to add more details are varied and interesting. Let's consider this short, choppy paragraph.

"San Miguel de Allende is an old city in Mexico. It has a small-town feel. The center of the city has cobblestone streets. It dates back to 1541. It has a rich cultural heritage. Many artists live and work there. It has a wide range of festivals throughout the year."

These short, choppy sentences are repetitive and dull. Notice how often a subject is followed immediately by a verb and how often the words "it" and "has" are repeated. The paragraph feels slow and boring.

To add variety to your writing, condense sentences into descriptive word groups, join sentences, begin sentences with transition words, and aim for active verbs.

Let's see how condensing sentences improves the paragraph. Sometimes a sentence can be condensed into a modifier and combined with a nearby sentence. "San Miguel de Allende, an old city in Mexico, has a small-town feel." The first sentence has been condensed to a descriptive phrase called an appositive, which is surrounded by commas when joined to the next sentence.

Another way to condense sentences requires forming a clause. "The center of the city, which features cobblestone streets, dates back to 1541." The descriptive clause beginning with "which" is used to combine these two sentences. Note, too, that this clause is surrounded by commas.

Now let's see how joining sentences with coordination or subordination improves the paragraph. Coordination joins two sentences or independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction. "It has a rich cultural heritage, and many artists live and work there." The sentences are now combined through coordination.

Although these sentences are joined grammatically, the connection between the

ideas still doesn't seem strong. So let's try subordination. Add a subordinating conjunction to one clause to join it to the other. "Because it has a rich cultural heritage, many artists live and work there." Now the sentences are joined dramatically, and the connection between the ideas is clearer, too.

Another way to inject some variety is to open some sentences with transitional expressions. "In addition, San Miguel has a wide range of festivals throughout the year." By adding a transition, the sentence pattern varies from the usual subject opener.

Active verbs help sentences seem lively. This paragraph overuses the verb "has." Check a thesaurus for related words. Replacing "has" with active verbs makes the paragraph more vivid.

Remember, sentence variety can add life to your writing, making your readers more engaged in what you have to say.