

## Chunking to Imitate

In these exercises you will become aware of meaningful divisions within sentences, an awareness you'll need to imitate model sentences. You will learn that authors compose their sentences one "chunk" or meaningful sentence part at a time.

**Directions (Part One):** From each pair of sentences below, select the sentence that is divided into meaningful chunks and ~~copy it on a separate piece of paper.~~

- 1a. He was still there / in front of the window, / staring at the saddle, / when two cowhands / came out / of the nearest saloon.
- 1b. He was / still there in front of / the window, staring at / the saddle, when two / cowhands came out of the / nearest saloon.  
Hal Borland, *When the Legends Die*
- 2a. Then she turned away / from my curious stare / and left the room, / crying.
- 2b. Then she turned / away from my curious / stare and left the / room, crying.  
Christy Brown, *My Left Foot*
- 3a. Shiloh's under the / sycamore, head on his paws, just / like the day he followed me home.
- 3b. Shiloh's under the sycamore, / head on his paws, / just like the day he followed me home.  
Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, *Shiloh*

**Directions (Part Two):** ~~Copy each model sentence below and then copy the sentence that can be divided into chunks that match the chunks in the model.~~

1. MODEL: I decided / not to open my eyes, / not to get out of bed.  
Rosa Guy, *The Friends*
- a. Running to catch the bus, I fell and dropped my books.
- b. I wanted only to get the best grade, only to be the best in the class.
2. MODEL: Soon a glow began / in the dark, / a tiny circle barely red.  
Joseph Krumbold, *Orion John*

- a. Then a sound came through the night, a small rustle hardly heard.
- b. We planned carefully for the party, wanting it to be a success.
3. MODEL: Finally, / I sit on a log, / put my gun at my feet, / and wait.  
Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, *Shiloh*
- a. Wondering what to do next, I just lean against the wall and stare into the sky.
- b. Occasionally, I walk down the path, carry my camera around my neck, and look.

**Directions (Part Three):** Copy the model and then copy the sentence that ~~imitates it.~~ Then chunk both the model and the sentence that imitates it into meaningful sentence parts, using a slash (/).

1. MODEL: His face was bloody, his shirt torn and bloody down the front.  
Hal Borland, *When the Legends Die*
- a. The day was perfect, the sky blue and perfect in the heavens.
- b. His sister married someone they didn't know, a stranger to the family.
2. MODEL: Big, rough teenagers jostled through the crowd, their sleeves rolled high enough to show off blue and red tattoos.  
Robert Lipsyte, *The Contender*
- a. An old, large man reached for the available chair and sat down, huffing and puffing, before I could get there.
- b. Silent, silver fish moved through the tank, their bodies sleek enough to suggest larger and more dangerous predators.

**Directions (Part Four):** Match the model with the sentence that most closely imitates it. Copy both sentences. Then chunk both, using a slash (/) between sentence parts. Finally, write your own imitation of each model.

1. MODEL: Then, stomach down on the bed, he began to draw.  
Katherine Paterson, *Bridge to Terabithia*
2. MODEL: Slowly, filled with dissatisfaction, he had gone to his room and got into bed.  
Betsy Byars, *The Summer of the Swans*

IMITATIONS

- a. Carefully, embarrassed by her mistake, she had repeated the process and done it correctly.
- b. Later, knapsack high on his back, he ran to catch up.

Unscrambling to Imitate

The unscrambling of sentence parts helps you see how those parts are connected within the model sentence. As a result, you will glimpse the mind of an author composing a sentence so you can go through a similar process when you compose sentences.

Directions: Unscramble the sentence parts to imitate the model. Then write your own sentence that imitates the model.

1. MODEL: When I awoke, there were snowflakes on my eyes.

Charles Fortis, *True Grit*

- a. in the sky
- b. there was a rainbow
- c. after the rain stopped

2. MODEL: Drawn by the scent of fish, the wild dogs sat on the hill, barking and growling at each other.

Scott O'Dell, *Island of the Blue Dolphins*

- a. yelping and trembling with delight
- b. covered with mud from the yard
- c. the frisky puppy rolled on the carpet

3. MODEL: Then she swung the switch five more times and, discovering Little Man had no intention of crying, ordered him up.

Mildred D. Taylor, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

- a. one more time and
- b. walked away
- c. then he checked the crime scene
- d. finding the suspect had been telling the truth

4. MODEL: The girls of her class nearly fought to hang out around her, to walk away with her, to beam flatteringly, to be her special friend.

Katherine Mansfield, *The Doll House*

- a. really tried to make his best effort with the team
- b. to keep up with the them
- c. to be his absolute best
- d. the boy of smallest size
- e. to work tirelessly

## Combining to Imitate

These exercises ask you to combine a series of plain sentences into just one varied sentence by changing the plain sentences into sentence parts resembling the model sentence. As you do these exercises, you'll become aware that plain sentences can easily be changed into sentence parts of better, more varied sentences.

**Directions:** Combine the sentences below to create a single sentence that has the same order of sentence parts as the model. You may eliminate some words to do so. Then write your own imitation of the model.

1. **MODEL:** The children, shouting and screaming, came charging back into their homeroom.

Rosa Guy, *The Friends*

- a. The ponies were neighing.
- b. The ponies were pawing.
- c. The ponies came bolting out of their stalls.

2. **MODEL:** As Seabiscuit broke from the gate, he was immediately bashed inward by Count Atlas, a hopeless long shot emerging from the stall on Seabiscuit's right.

Laura Hillenbrand, *Seabiscuit: An American Legend*

- a. Something happened as the car backed out of the space.
- b. What happened was that it was suddenly hit sideways.
- c. The hit was by an oncoming truck.
- d. The truck was a delivery pickup.
- e. The pickup was coming from the alley behind the market.

3. **MODEL:** A light kindled in the sky, a blaze of yellow fire behind dark barriers.

J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*

- a. A noise erupted.
- b. The noise erupted from the forest.
- c. The noise was a screech.
- d. The screech was of angry ravens.
- e. The ravens were in decaying trees.

4. MODEL: He knew the bears would soon be leaving their winter dens, to travel, to claim their old ranges, to challenge intruders, and to fight their fearful battles among themselves.

Hal Borland, *When the Legends Die*

- a. She knew something about the students.
- b. She knew they would soon be entering their new classrooms.
- c. The students would be entering the classrooms to learn.
- d. They would also be entering them to take new courses.
- e. They would also be entering them to make new friends.
- f. And they would be entering them to discover their identities as young adults.

## Imitating Alone

Once you have learned how to imitate professional sentences, you will be able to easily imitate almost any professional sentence just by seeing how the model is built and then building your own sentence in a similar way.

Directions: Choose one of the models and write an imitation of the entire sentence, one sentence part at a time. See if your classmates can guess your model.

Models:

1. He was white and shaking, / his mouth opening and shutting / without words.  
Leslie Morris, "Three Shots for Charlie Beston"
2. Now, / leaning his head out of the window / of the pickup, / he thought he would die of thirst.  
Katherine Paterson, *Park's Quest*
3. Hobbling on one foot, / Wanda opened the closet door / and turned on the light.  
Betsy Byars, *The Summer of the Swans*
4. Propped on her elbows / with her chin in her fists, / she stared at the black wolf, / trying to catch his eye.  
Jean Craighead George, *Julie of the Wolves*