

***See Spot Run***  
***Six Traits: Developing Sentence Fluency***

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**Grade level:** Middle School – High School

**Content areas:** English Language Arts  
Six Traits Writing – Developing Sentence Fluency

**Invitation:** It seems that Dick and Jane have been watching Spot run for decades.

*See Dick. See Jane. See Spot.*  
*See Spot run. Run Spot. Run, run, run.*  
*Look, look, look. See, see, see.*  
*See Spot run.*  
*Run, run, run.*

Any reader understands the context of this story. Siblings Dick and Jane own a constantly running dog. Since they appear powerless to stop the dog, they are left with nothing other than to watch the dog run . . . and run . . . and run.

When authors write, they essentially begin a conversation with potential readers. Like all good conversationalists, effective authors use engaging language and interesting sentences. In this lesson, students learn ways to develop sentence fluency to add interest to their writing. Like this:

*You could see them flying across the blades of grass. Jane and her brother, Dick, ran as if there were wings on their shoes. Spying Spot – running as usual – Dick and Jane used their most commanding voices to order Spot to stop! "Stop, Spot." Stop, stop, stop!" And he did.*

**Assessment:** Teachers will know students understand ways that sentence fluency brings interest and rhythm to writing when they deconstruct, analyze and reconstruct authentic writing samples from current and classic literature.

**Technology Tools**

Dana by AlphaSmart or Dana Wireless  
Printer  
Computer  
AlphaWord software

## Additional Resources

Current and classic literature pieces

## Internet sites:

Learn about Six Traits writing from the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory  
<http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/scoring.asp?odelay=3&d=1&r=1#definition>

Learn about sentence combining at:

[http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/combining\\_skills.htm](http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/combining_skills.htm)

## National Standards for Students

### National Educational Technology Standards

- Understand basic concepts and operations
- Practice responsible use
- Use technology tools to enhance learning, collaborate, publish and promote creativity.
- Use telecommunications and a variety of media and formats to communicate.

### National Council of Teachers of English

- Employ a wide range of writing strategies
- Apply knowledge of language structure and conventions
- Conduct research
- Use technological and information resources
- Participate in literacy communities

For a detailed explanation of NETS for Students visit: [http://cnets.iste.org/students/s\\_stands.html](http://cnets.iste.org/students/s_stands.html)

Learn more about NCTE Standards at: <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>

## Step-by-Step

### Step 1: Preparation

Study the six traits of writing. Several sites offer resources and teaching ideas. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory offers extensive resources for the six traits. Access their site at <http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/department.asp?d=1>.

Study sentence combining (see

[http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/combining\\_skills.htm](http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/combining_skills.htm) for good activities).

Select several 25 – 50 word passages from high interest current literature and classic literature. Be sure to follow all copyright guidelines when using passages. You may use 10% or 1000 words – whichever is less – of copyrighted text. For an excellent list of copyright rules of thumb, go to

<http://www.standrews.austin.tx.us/library/Copyright.htm>.

Post passages or create and beam to student Danas.

Be sure students understand basic sentence structure and vocabulary, such as:

Subject  
Predicate  
Object  
Adjective  
Adverb

### Step 2: Deconstruct

Beam a sample passage, such as the following one from Murder at Ford's Theatre by Margaret Truman.

*The slight young detective stood on the stage and stared up to the box in which President Lincoln had been assassinated, kept pretty much as it was that fateful night. Klayman was no stranger to Ford's Theatre. He'd spent many hours there soaking in its historic meaning and listening to tourists' lectures delivered by park rangers.*

Working with a partner, each student reads the passage aloud. Explain that good writing – like a conversation – flows and is interesting. Encourage students to note the author's use of punctuation and include pauses in their reading.

Now, have each student de-construct the fluent passage into a set of accurate, but boring sentences. Like this:

*The detective stood on the stage. He stared up at the box where President Lincoln had been assassinated. The box had been kept the same since that night. Klayman came to Ford's Theatre all the time. He studied its historic meaning. He listened to the park rangers tell the tourists all about it.*

Once students complete the task, have them read the de-constructed versions aloud. Again, emphasize using punctuation to add pause to the reading.

Lead a discussion about the differences in the two pieces of writing. Which one was easier to hear? Which one was easier to read?

Help students see that sentence fluency adds pace and interest to their writing. Talk about the importance of combining ideas into sentences that flow. Stress the importance of punctuating sentences to add to their fluency.

### Step 3: Analyze and reconstruct

Compare students' deconstructed passage with the original, analyze the features used to combine sentence and reconstruct the passage. Begin with the first sentence in the Margaret Truman's passage.

*The slight young detective stood on the stage and stared up to the box in which President Lincoln had been assassinated, kept pretty much as it was that fateful night.*

She combined at least three ideas to form this one sentence. She developed sentence fluency by combining the verbs "stood," "stared," and "kept."

Now analyze and the final fluent sentence in Truman's passage:

*He'd spent many hours there soaking in its historic meaning and listening to tourists' lectures delivered by park rangers.*

Again, she combined verbs – in this case "spent," "soaking" and "listening" - to add fluency to what would have otherwise been short choppy uninteresting sentences.

### Step 4: Combining predicates

Help students understand that they can combine sentences using several strategies. One of the easiest strategies is to focus on predicates. Try combining this one:

*The sprinter approached the starting line. She stretched one last time. The starter called for runners to take their mark. She found her lane. Then she got into starting position. Finally, she heard the "pop" from the starter pistol.*

First, combine two predicates. In this example, combine "approached" and "stretched." Like this:

The sprinter approached the starting line, stretching one last time.

Now, try to combine three predicates. In this example, combine "called," "found" and "got." Like this:

*As the starter called for runners to take their marks, she found her lane and assumed the familiar starting position.*

Finally, finish it up with powerful word choices. Like this:

*The agile sprinter approached the starting line, stretching her fine-tuned limbs one last time. As the gruff race official ordered runners to take their marks, the sprinter claimed her lane and assumed the starting position. With the pop of the starter's pistol, each muscle responded with force unequalled as she overtook each runner and burned passed the finish line.*



**Step 5: Combining subjects**

Follow the same process as described in Step 4, combining subjects rather than predicates. For example:

*Sam had his eye on the used Mustang for several weeks. The salesperson had gotten used to seeing Sam each afternoon around 4:00.*

Combined, it reads like this:

*As had become their daily 4:00 p.m. ritual, Sam eyed the used Mustang just as the salesperson stole a glance at him.*

**Step 6: Practice combining and sharing**

Students beam combined sentences to each other and read aloud.