

## SUPPLEMENTAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION

**WR.3.C**  
**NARRATIVE**

### Varying Sentence Length

Lessons WR.3.A–F offer direct instruction on discrete skills and should be implemented between Lessons 10 and 11. Students may benefit from some or all of the instruction in these lessons; only those lessons or activities that address student needs should be implemented.

#### Introduction

This lesson is composed of two distinct but related activities that center on skills for effectively varying sentence length to improve narrative writing. Each activity may last an entire class period.

Writing Instruction Options:

- Combining Sentences Using Semicolons and Colons
- Splitting Sentences

In this lesson, the teacher provides direct instruction to students on combining sentences using semicolons and colons. Students also practice splitting sentences to improve their clarity of their writing. Students focus on revising their own narratives for effectively combining sentences using semicolons and colons or for splitting sentences before transitioning to a peer discussion of revisions. Student learning is assessed via the completion of the WR.3 Revision Exit Slip: Varying Sentence Length, on which each student records one example of a successful revision.

For homework, students choose three different passages from their narratives and revise each passage, focusing on effectively combining sentences using semicolons and colons or splitting sentences as necessary to strengthen their writing. Students also write a few sentences explaining whether or not they will keep the revisions they drafted and the impact this decision has on their narratives.

#### Standards

##### Assessed Standard(s)

W.9-10.5	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
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L.9-10.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
L.9-10.2.a, b	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. a. Use a semicolon (and perhaps a conjunctive adverb) to link two or more closely related independent clauses. b. Use a colon to introduce a list or quotation.
<b>Addressed Standard(s)</b>	
W.9-10.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.
SL.9-10.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

## Assessment

<b>Assessment(s)</b>
Student learning is assessed via completion of the WR.3 Revision Exit Slip: Varying Sentence Length. Students record the original passage from their narratives as well as the revised passage. Students then explain why the revision is effective.
<b>① Consider assessing these revisions using the Narrative Writing Checklist.</b>
<b>High Performance Response(s)</b>
A High Performance Response should:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record the original passage (e.g., Now I was ready to report. “The Eagle has landed.”).</li> <li>Revise the original passage, focusing on combining sentences using semicolons and/or colons or splitting sentences (e.g., Now I was ready to report: “The Eagle has landed.”).</li> <li>Explain why the revision is effective (e.g., I used a colon to connect these two sentences, because the dialogue clarifies what the narrator means in the first clause.).</li> </ul>
<b>① See the Model WR.3 Revision Exit Slip: Varying Sentence Length for more examples.</b>

## Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
<b>Standards:</b>	
• Standards: W.9-10.5, L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2.a, b, W.9-10.6, SL.9-10.1	
<b>Learning Sequence:</b>	
1. Introduction of Lesson Agenda	1. 5%
2. Homework Accountability	2. 0%
3. Writing Instruction Options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combining Sentences Using Semicolons and Colons</li> <li>• Splitting Sentences</li> </ul>	3. 30%
4. Narrative Writing Checklist	4. 5%
5. Individual Revision	5. 30%
6. Revision Discussion	6. 20%
7. WR.3 Revision Exit Slip: Varying Sentence Length	7. 5%
8. Closing	8. 5%

## Materials

- Student copies of the up-to-date Narrative Writing Checklist (refer to WR.3 Lesson B Model Narrative Writing Checklist)
- Copies of the WR.3 Revision Exit Slip: \_\_\_\_\_ for each student (refer to WR.3 Lesson A)—students will need additional blank copies
- Copies of the Semicolon and Colon Handout for each student

## Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
<b>10%</b>	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	<b>Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.</b>
	<i>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
▶	Indicates student action(s).

	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

## Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda. In this lesson, students learn how to combine sentences using semicolons and colons or how to split sentences to strengthen their writing. Students revise their own drafts before participating in a peer discussion of their individual revisions.

- ▶ Students look at the agenda.

## Activity 2: Homework Accountability

0%

- ① Students will be held accountable for homework during Activity 6: Revision Discussion.

## Activity 3: Writing Instruction Options

30%

- ① Based on student need, select from the two options below:
  - Combining Sentences Using Semicolons and Colons (See Appendix 1)
  - Splitting Sentences (See Appendix 2)

## Activity 4: Narrative Writing Checklist

5%

- ① The following activity addresses the expectations of SL.9-10.1.

Instruct students to take out their copies of the Narrative Writing Checklist.

- ① Consider posting or projecting the Narrative Writing Checklist.

Instruct students to Think, Pair, Share about the following questions:

**Based on this lesson's writing instruction, what items should the class add to the Narrative Writing Checklist? In which categories do these items belong and why?**

- ▶ Student responses will vary but should include points that address the following:
  - Correctly incorporate semicolons and colons to make my writing clearer? This item belongs in the Control of Conventions category, because it is about proper use of punctuation.

- Include sentences of varied length that contribute to the flow and effectiveness of my narrative? This item belongs in the Coherence, Organization, and Style category, because varying sentence length affects both the coherence and style of narratives.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses. Guide students to a consensus on what items the class will add to the Narrative Writing Checklist and in which category each item belongs. Instruct students to add the new items in the appropriate categories to their copies of the Narrative Writing Checklist.

- ▶ Students add new items in the appropriate categories to their copies of the Narrative Writing Checklist.
- ⓘ Consider adding the new items in the appropriate categories to the displayed copy of the Narrative Writing Checklist.

## Activity 5: Individual Revision

30%

Instruct students to independently revise their drafts focusing on whichever of the following writing skills they learned in this lesson:

- Combining Sentences Using Semicolons and Colons
  - Splitting Sentences
- ⓘ For example, if students completed the writing instruction activity on Combining Sentences Using Semicolons and Colons, then their revisions will focus on using semicolons and colons to combine sentences rather than on splitting sentences.

Explain to students that they should revise at least three passages for effectively combining sentences using semicolons and colons or for splitting sentences. Remind students to refer to the Narrative Writing Checklist as they revise their drafts.

Transition to individual revision.

- ▶ Students independently revise their drafts for effectively combining sentences using semicolons and colons or for splitting sentences.
- ⓘ For sample revisions, see the Model WR.3 Revision Exit Slip: Varying Sentence Length.

## Activity 6: Revision Discussion

20%

- ⓘ The following activity addresses the expectations of SL.9-10.1.

Instruct students to form pairs or small groups to share at least one of the passages they revised during the previous activity and one passage they revised during the previous lesson’s homework assignment. Explain to students that in addition to receiving feedback on their revisions, this discussion is also an opportunity to consider how they can use similar revisions or try similar techniques as their peers in their own papers. In this discussion, students provide brief constructive criticism to their peers. Remind students that constructive criticism helps them share advice with their peers in a positive and academic manner.

- ⓘ Refer to Lesson 7 for a discussion of constructive criticism.

Instruct students to follow these steps to complete the revision discussion:

1. Show your peers the original passage and the revised passage.
2. Explain to your peers how the revision improves your draft.
3. Ask your peers to provide brief constructive criticism on your revisions.
  - ▶ Students share with peers at least two effective revisions they made to their drafts.

- ⓘ In lessons that include the Revision Discussion, consider maintaining the same peer pairs or small groups for several lessons, so that students can benefit from a reviewer who is familiar with their drafts.

## Activity 7: WR.3 Revision Exit Slip: Varying Sentence Length

5%

Explain that for this lesson’s assessment, students record and explain one example of a successful revision. Distribute blank copies of the WR.3 Revision Exit Slip: \_\_\_\_\_ to each student. Instruct students to fill in the title “Varying Sentence Length” on their exit slips. Instruct students to complete the exit slip independently. Inform students that their revisions will be assessed with the Narrative Writing Checklist.

- ⓘ See the High Performance Response and Model WR.3 Revision Exit Slip: Varying Sentence Length for sample student responses.

## Activity 8: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to choose three different passages from their drafts. For each passage, students revise their drafts focusing on whichever of the following writing skills they learned in this lesson:

- Combining Sentences Using Semicolons and Colons
- Splitting Sentences

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following questions for each revision:

**Will you keep the revision you drafted? Why or why not?**

**Explain the impact of your decision on your narrative.**

- ① If an online writing community has been established for the class, instruct students to post their revised drafts for sharing with peers and/or assessment. (Students' use of the online writing community addresses the expectations of W.9-10.6.)

- ▶ Students follow along.

## Homework

Choose three different passages from your draft. For each passage, revise your draft focusing on whichever of the following writing skills you learned in this lesson:

- Combining Sentences Using Semicolons and Colons
- Splitting Sentences

Respond briefly in writing to the following questions for each revision:

**Will you keep the revision you drafted? Why or why not?**

**Explain the impact of your decision on your narrative.**

## Model Narrative Writing Checklist

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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**Directions:** Use this template to record the checklist items that convey the components of an effective narrative established as a class.

Coherence, Organization, and Style	Drafting	Finalization
<b>Does my response...</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Develop real or imagined experiences or events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish a point of view?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Include settings, characters, and plots that develop the experiences or events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use narrative techniques such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, or multiple plot lines to develop the narrative?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use the passage of time to structure the narrative?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have an introduction that engages and orients the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have an introduction that establishes a narrator and/or characters?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have an introduction that builds a smooth progression of experiences or events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop distinct character voices?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the experiences and observations within the narrative?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use different structural techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to develop experiences, events, settings, and characters?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Include varied syntax to contribute to a cohesive and engaging narrative?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Include transitional words and phrases that clearly show the relationship among characters, experiences, and events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Include sentences of varied length that contribute to the flow and effectiveness of my narrative?*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Control of Conventions</b> <b>Does my response...</b>	<b>Drafting</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Finalization</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Correctly incorporate semicolons and colons to make my writing clearer?*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

\*Asterisks indicate new items added in this lesson.

## Model WR.3 Revision Exit Slip: Varying Sentence Length

Name:		Class:		Date:	
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**Directions:** In the first column, record the original passage from your narrative draft. In the second column, record the revised passage. In the third column, explain why the revision is effective.

Original Passage	Revised Passage	Explanation
We were on the moon. There wasn't much time to celebrate.	We were on the moon; there wasn't much time to celebrate.	I added a semicolon after "moon," so now the sentence has varied punctuation and it is still grammatically correct.
Now I was ready to report. "The Eagle has landed."	Now I was ready to report: "The Eagle has landed."	I used a colon to connect these two sentences, because the dialogue clarifies what the narrator means in the first clause.
She ran my card through her machine and held it for a moment, looking at it in her hand, which moved as if she were going to return it to me. Instead she took another look, squinting hard, and she peered at the card and back at me, as if she were trying to match a face to the name.	She ran my card through her machine and held it for a moment, looking at it in her hand. Her hand moved as if she were going to return it to me. But instead she took another look, squinting hard. She peered at the card and back at me, as if she were trying to match a face to the name.	I split the sentences in a way that helps to convey the recollection as actions that are part of a sequence. This revision clarifies which details relate to each other and it also creates a sequence of events.

## Appendix 1: Combining Sentences Using Semicolons and Colons

Explain to students that they can strengthen the clarity with which they develop the experiences and events in their narratives by using semicolons and colons properly and effectively. Varying sentence length by combining sentences with semicolons or colons contributes to an engaging, cohesive narrative.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** If necessary, explain that *cohesion* in writing refers to how well the paragraphs and sentences link the claims and evidence of a text together into a coherent whole.
- ▶ Students write the definition of *cohesion* in the appropriate section of their vocabulary journals.

Explain to students that they must understand what an *independent clause* is in order to use semicolons and colons properly.

- ① Students may be familiar with the components of an *independent clause*. Consider asking students to volunteer an explanation of what an *independent clause* is and provide an example before providing the definition of an *independent clause* to the class.

Provide students with the following definition: *independent clause* means “a clause that can stand alone as a sentence, containing a subject and a predicate with a finite verb.” An *independent clause* communicates a complete thought.

- ▶ Students write the definition of *independent clause* in the appropriate section of their vocabulary journals.

Post or project the following example of an independent clause.

- ① The following example is taken from section 3, paragraph 8 of the article “The Flight of Apollo 11” by Kenneth F. Weaver (refer to Lessons 4–5).
- “The thrill of a race had added to the excitement.”

Ask a student volunteer to identify the elements of the independent clause given above.

- Student responses should include:
  - The subject is “thrill.”
  - The predicate is “had added to the excitement” with “had added” as the verb of the sentence.

**i Differentiation Consideration:** Students may need more support in understanding the components of a complete sentence in order to understand independent clauses. Consider reviewing and posting the definitions and examples of the parts of speech such as *subject*, *predicate*, and *verb*.

- ▶ Students write the definitions of *subject*, *predicate*, and *verb* in the appropriate section of their vocabulary journals.

Explain to students that semicolons are a type of punctuation that can be used to connect two independent clauses and show they are related. Post or project the following example for students:

- i Example 1** is modified from section 3, paragraph 12 of the article “The Flight of Apollo 11” by Kenneth F. Weaver. Example 2 is taken from section 3, paragraph 12 of the article “The Flight of Apollo 11” (refer to Lessons 4–5).
- **Example 1:** Armstrong had no doubts, however, about what to do. He had faced problems like this many times before in the simulators.

Then, post or project the following example of the two sentences linked with a semicolon:

- **Example 2:** Armstrong had no doubts, however, about what to do; he had faced problems like this many times before in the simulators.

Explain to students that it is possible to keep two distinct sentences instead of joining the independent clauses with a semicolon, but when the ideas are closely linked, combining the sentences can contribute to the cohesion and flow of the passage.

Inform students that semicolons are just one way of combining sentences. Writers can use commas and conjunctions or transitional words or phrases to combine independent clauses (e.g., Armstrong had no doubts, however, about what to do, because he had faced problems like this many times before in the simulators.).

- ▶ Students follow along.

- i Lesson B and Lesson D provide instruction on transitional words and phrases and comma usage, respectively.**

Post or project the following paragraph and instruct students to work in pairs or small groups to practice combining sentences using semicolons, conjunctions, or transitional words or phrases. Encourage students to vary their methods of combining sentences. Explain to students that they may want to leave some short sentences to vary the length of sentences throughout the paragraph and to emphasize certain ideas with short sentences.

- i The following example is modified from paragraph 15 of the Model Narrative (refer to Lesson 10).**
- We slowed down. We straightened out just in time. We landed softly. We weren’t even sure we were on solid ground. I couldn’t completely relax. I didn’t know if the surface of the moon would

hold our ship. Coming in, the dust from the surface was blowing up in fine clouds. The dust looked like a kind of fog. It was hard to tell what was underneath. Once we got the craft down, it stayed there. Now I was ready to report. “The Eagle has landed.”

Lead a brief whole-class discussion in which volunteers share how and why they combined sentences.

● Student responses may include:

- We slowed down and straightened out just in time. We landed so softly that we weren't even sure we were on solid ground. I couldn't completely relax, because I didn't know if the surface of the moon would hold our ship. Coming in, the dust from the surface was blowing up in fine clouds that looked like a kind of fog; it was hard to tell what was underneath. But once we got the craft down, it stayed there. Now I was ready to report: “The Eagle has landed.”

ⓘ **Differentiation Consideration:** Some students may struggle to immediately grasp the proper use of semicolons. If students struggle, work with them individually to write out 5–10 examples of the proper use of semicolons.

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Explain to students that a colon is another type of punctuation that is useful for combining related independent clauses. Post or project the following examples:

ⓘ The following examples can also be found on the Semicolon and Colon Handout.

- **Example 1:** Once I jumped off, I managed to speak the line I'd rehearsed in my head all those times: “That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.”
- **Example 2:** For the trip we needed different kinds of equipment: life support packs, helmets, and layers of special clothing under our space suits.
- **Example 3:** We didn't have time to celebrate, because we had a mission to accomplish: we had to collect and report on samples of the moon's surface.

Instruct students to work in pairs or small groups to describe the three different uses for colons.

● Student responses should include:

- In example 1, the colon links together one independent clause and a quotation that is a complete sentence. This suggests that a colon can be used to introduce a quotation after an independent clause when the quotation itself is also an independent clause.
- In example 2, the colon comes after an independent clause and before a list. This shows that a colon can be used to introduce a list.

- In example 3, the colon is between two independent clauses. The second independent clause seems to explain the idea in the first clause that the astronauts “had a mission to accomplish.” This suggests that a colon can be used to link two independent clauses when the second clause provides more detail about or emphasizes the first clause.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Distribute the Semicolon and Colon Handout to each student. Encourage students to use this handout as a reference for proper and common uses of semicolons and colons.

- ▶ Students examine the handout.

- ① **Differentiation Consideration:** Some students may struggle to immediately grasp the proper use of colons. If students struggle, work with them individually to write out 5–10 examples of the proper use of colons.

## Semicolon and Colon Handout

Remember that an *independent clause* is “a clause that can stand alone as a sentence, containing a subject and a predicate with a finite verb.” An *independent clause* communicates a complete thought.

### Common and Proper Uses of the Semicolon:

- Use a semicolon to connect two *independent clauses* that are related to one another.
  - Example: We were on the moon; there wasn’t much time to celebrate.

### Common and Proper Uses of the Colon:

- Use a colon when introducing a quotation after an independent clause. The quotation must also be an independent clause.
  - Example: Once I jumped off, I managed to speak the line I’d rehearsed in my head all those times: “That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.”
- Use a colon when introducing a list.
  - Example: For the trip we needed different kinds of equipment: life support packs, helmets, and layers of special clothing under our space suits.
- Use a colon between two independent clauses when the second clause provides more detail about or emphasizes the first clause.
  - Example: We didn’t have time to celebrate, because we had a mission to accomplish: we had to collect and report on samples of the moon’s surface.

**Further reference:** The Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL): <http://owl.english.purdue.edu> (search terms: semicolons and colons).

## Appendix 2: Splitting Sentences

Explain that writers often combine sentences to show connections between ideas and to make writing flow smoothly; however, sometimes writers split long sentences into shorter sentences in order to vary sentence length or make details stand out. Splitting long sentences can also help writers change the pace of the narrative or create a smooth progression of events.

Post or project the following paragraph and instruct students to work in pairs or small groups to practice splitting sentences by replacing commas and conjunctions or transitional words and phrases with periods. Explain to students that they may not want to split all the sentences in order to vary the length of sentences throughout the paragraph.

- ⓘ The following example is modified from paragraph 2 of the Model Narrative (refer to lesson 10).
- She ran my card through her machine and held it for a moment, looking at it in her hand, which moved as if she were going to return it to me. Instead she took another look, squinting hard, and she peered at the card and back at me, as if she were trying to match a face to the name.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion in which volunteers share how and why they split sentences.

🗣 Student responses may include:

- She ran my card through her machine and held it for a moment, looking at it in her hand. Her hand moved as if she were going to return it to me. But instead she took another look, squinting hard. She peered at the card and back at me, as if she were trying to match a face to the name.