From: Don Killgallon. *Sentence Composing for College: A Worktext on Sentence Variety and Maturity.* Boynton/Cook Publishers. 1998.

Composing Sentences

There are four sentence-manipulating techniques: sentence unscrambling, sentence imitating, sentence combining, and sentence expanding. Professional writers are adept at filling three positions in their sentences: the beginning (sentence opener), the slot between a subject and verb (subject-verb split), and the ending (sentence closer).

**Sentence Openers:** A sentence opener is any structure that occupies the opening position of a sentence.

Here is list of sentences, all written by professional writers, but with some parts deleted.

1. The outlook was anything but bright.
2. No more than six or seven were out on the cold, open platform.
3. He started along the main corridor on his way toward the stairs.
4. Manuel noticed the points of the bull’s horns.
5. Elizabeth Willard lighted a lamp and put it on a dressing table that stood by the door.

Now compare the sentences above with the originals below. Notice that it’s the **boldface** parts (sentence openers) that account for the professional sentence variety.

1a. **With the newcomers hopeless and forlorn, and the old team worn out by twenty-five hundred miles of continuous trail,** the outlook was anything but bright. Jack London The Call of the Wild

2a. **Of the twenty-some young men who were waiting at the station for their dates to arrive on the 10:52,** no more than six or seven were out on the cold, open platform. J. D. Salinger, Franny and Zooey

3a. **With the blood specimen in his left hand, walking in a kind of distraction that he had felt all morning, probably because of the dream and his restless night,** he started along the main corridor on his way toward the stairs. John Hersey, Hiroshima

4a. **Standing still now and spreading the red cloth of the muleta with the sword, pricking the point into the cloth so that the sword, now held in his left hand, spread the red flannel like the jib of a boat,** Manuel noticed the points of the bull’s horns. Ernest Hemmingway, “The Undefeated”

5a. **In her room, tucked away in a corner of the old Willard house,** Elizabeth Willard lighted a lamp and put it on a dressing table that stood by the door.

 Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio