

Give Your Sentences Oomph!

Make your sentences *emphatic* with two tricks: 1. give each major idea its own showcase sentence; 2. whenever gracefully possible, organize your sentence so that it ends on its key words / main idea.* To do this, read the sentence, decide what the most important words are--the words you want to stress--and revise the sentence to end on those words.

If you have several important words or groups of words, and you want them each to receive strong emphasis, put each at the end of its own sentence. Here's an example:

Weeks, months, and years went by, and I continued to love reading, but then I turned thirteen. (unemphatic).

Weeks, months, and years went by, and I continued to love reading. Then I turned thirteen. (emphatic).

Using the tricks above, revise these unemphatic sentences:

Reading and writing just didn't excite me and they seemed a waste of time to me.

That summer, when my grandmother taught me to ride, I discovered that I loved horses and a dream took shape that someday I would be a trainer.

When he slowly opened the box, it was full of tiny white teeth, and he gasped.

I have valuable leadership skills that I have acquired over these last five years of service.

A little boy in the back of the theater yelled, "I have to pee!" just as the hero bent to kiss the heroine.

His mother always told him, "Pray more, worry less," when he had a problem on his mind.

The cat had one eye, black paws, and white fur.

It was my birthday, and from now on the world would see me not as a child but as a young lady, according to my mother.

They began to cry, they were laughing so hard.

Going to bed hungry is what happens to one third of the world's children.

I learned that my niece had given birth to a beautiful eight-pound baby boy when I picked up the phone last night.

"I'm proud of you, Son," said Jason's father as he paid him for his work.

The autopsy revealed that the ambassador had been poisoned and had not died of natural causes.

We heard singing as we approached the house.

* One time you should NOT save the key words/main point for the end of the sentence is when you are conveying complex material with lots of details. In that case, ensure your readers' understanding by presenting the **main point** at the beginning of the sentence; then go into all the details. Example: **In June, three hundred incoming students were tested for math skills** using two instruments, the ABC Test and the XYZ Test, in compliance with state guidelines and in order to qualify for Touch the Sky funding. You can see that your readers would get bogged down and discouraged if you began with all the details. They would wonder, "Where on Earth is the writer *going* with all this?"