

# B to A in English

- 1 A-grade writers are fluent, assured, confident and often quirky. They take **risks** in their writing.
- 2 Most importantly, A-grade writers use a **variety of simple and complex sentences**. Sentence variety is the key. They may start a paragraph with a short, simple sentence. They may use some sentences which coordinate ideas with “and”, “but” or “or”. They will also use complex sentences. But the key is variety – no single style dominates.
- 3 A-grade writers use **vocabulary** which is descriptive (but not too flowery), precise, visual and occasionally unexpected. They use simple, familiar words as well as more complex ones. Their writing helps us to see what they are describing or to understand the ideas they are explaining
- 4 In **literature**, A-grade writers know the texts well, comment a lot on the language and embed lots of really short quotations into their sentences

This **is** A-grade writing:

*Q: Describe the room you are in.*

*A: The room is prison-like. It feels somehow as if I am trapped here, imprisoned, even though the window is open, the door ajar, and a breeze drifts in from outside. All the same it is a prison, a place where I am locked up each evening until I've completed my homework. It ought to be a private place of enjoyable study; instead, sadly, with the exams looming, it's a place I hate.*

(= variety of sentences, variety of vocabulary)

This **isn't**:

*Q: Describe the room you are in.*

*A: The room is small and like a prison. I feel as if I am trapped here because of all the work I have to do before the exams. A window and door are open and there is a soft breeze but it still feels to me like a prison cell.*

(= lack of variety of sentences and predictable vocabulary)

*Email me a piece of writing and I'll give you feedback:*

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# A quick guide to sentence variety

**Simple** sentences are **short** and punchy:

*Macbeth is a villain. Lady Macbeth wields huge influence. The mood now changes.*

**Compound** sentences link ideas with **“and” and “but”**. Don't use too many.

*At the start of the play Macbeth is a hero **but** by the end he is a villain.*

**Complex** sentences might use **posh connectives**:

- ***Although** Macbeth begins as a hero, he ends the play as a villain.*
- ***AS** I read the play, I noticed the increasing feeling of menace.*
- *We know that he will die **because** of all the hints in the language.*
- ***Whilst** Macbeth agonises about his future, Lady Macbeth takes her own life.*
- ***However** much we sympathise with Macbeth at the start, by the end we despise his ruthlessness.*
- *Macbeth is a fascinating play **despite** its demanding language*

They might have subordinate clauses using **which, who and that**:

- *Macbeth, **who** begins the play as a hero, concludes it as a villain.*
- *It is a play **that** many people have enjoyed reading.*
- *The characters **who** most interests me is Banquo.*

They might be **2-part** sentences:

- ***Reading** the play again, we are aware of its deep menacing tone.*
- ***Thinking** about his future, Macbeth is filled with despair.*
- ***Frustrated** by her husband's weakness, Lady Macbeth decides to act.*