Combining Sentences

The simple sentence, the most basic sentence in the English language, can be exceptionally useful and powerful. Some of the greatest statements in literature have been presented in the simple sentence. Its strength is in its singleness of purpose. However, a piece of writing made up of a long series of simple sentences is likely to be monotonous. Moreover, the form may suggest a separateness of ideas that does not serve your purpose well. If your ideas are closely related, some equal in importance and some not, you can combine sentences to show the relationships between your ideas.

Coordination: The Compound Sentence

If you intend to communicate two equally important and closely related ideas, you certainly will want to place them close together, probably in a compound sentence.

Suppose we take two simple sentences that we want to combine:

I am very tired. I worked very hard today.

We have already looked at coordinating conjunctions as a way of joining independent clauses to create compound sentences. Depending on which coordinating conjunction you use, you can show different kinds of relationships. (The following list is arranged according to the FANBOYS acronym. Only the first conjunction joins the original two sentences.)

For shows a reason:
I am very tired, for I worked very hard today.

And shows equal ideas:
I am very tired, and I want to rest for a few minutes.

Nor indicates a negative choice or alternative:
I am not tired, nor am I hungry right now.

But shows contrast:
I am very tired, but I have no time to rest now.
Or indicates a choice or an alternative:
I will take a nap, or I will go out jogging.

Yet indicates contrast:
I am very tired, yet I am unable to relax.

So points to a result:
I am very tired, so I will take a nap.

Punctuation with Coordinating Conjunctions
When you combine two sentences by using a coordinating conjunction, drop the period, change the capital letter to a small letter, and insert a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

\[
\begin{align*}
, & \text{ for} \\
, & \text{ and} \\
, & \text{ nor} \\
, & \text{ but} \\
, & \text{ or} \\
, & \text{ yet} \\
, & \text{ so}
\end{align*}
\]

Independent clause independent clause.

Exercise 1 Combining Sentences: Compound

Combine the following pairs of sentences by deleting the first period, changing the capital letter that begins the second sentence to a small letter, and inserting a comma and an appropriate coordinating conjunction from the FANBOYS list. Feel free to reword the sentences as necessary.

1. James Francis “Jim” Thorpe, a Sac and Fox Indian, was born in 1888 near Prague, Oklahoma. At the age of sixteen, he left home to enroll in the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania.

2. He had had little experience playing football. He led his small college to victories against championship teams.

3. He had scarcely heard of other sports. He golfed in the 70s, bowled above 200, and played varsity basketball and lacrosse.
4. In the 1912 Olympic Games for amateur athletes at Stockholm, Jim Thorpe entered the two most rigorous events, the decathlon and the pentathlon. He won both.

5. King Gustav V of Sweden told him, "You, Sir, are the greatest athlete in the world." Jim Thorpe said, "Thanks, King."

6. Later it was said he had once been paid fifteen dollars a week to play baseball, making him a professional athlete. The Olympic medals were taken from him.

7. Soon a Major League baseball scout did offer Thorpe a respectable contract. He played in the National League for six seasons.

8. Not content to play only one sport, he also earned a good salary for that time in professional football. After competing for fifteen years, he said he had never played for the money.

9. Many regard Jim Thorpe as the greatest athlete of the twentieth century. He excelled in many sports at the highest levels of athletic competition.

10. Off the playing fields, he was known by his friends as a modest, quiet man. On the fields, he was a person of joyful combat.

**Semicolons and Conjunctive Adverbs**

We have also already looked at using a semicolon to join independent clauses to make a compound sentence. Here are two more simple sentences to combine:

We were late. We missed the first act.
We can make one compound sentence out of them by joining the two clauses with a semicolon:

We were late; we missed the first act.

We can also use words called conjunctive adverbs after semicolons to make the relationship between the two clauses clearer. Look at how the conjunctive adverb therefore adds the idea of “as a result.”

We were late; therefore, we missed the first act.

Conjunctive adverbs include the following words and phrases: also, consequently, furthermore, hence, however, in fact, moreover, nevertheless, now, on the other hand, otherwise, soon, therefore, similarly, then, thus.

When you coordinate ideas with conjunctive adverbs, consider the meanings of these words:

As a result of: therefore, consequently, hence, thus, then
To the contrary or with reservation: however, nevertheless, otherwise, on the other hand
In addition to: moreover, also
To emphasize or specify: in fact, for example
To compare: similarly

Punctuation with Semicolons and Conjunctive Adverbs

When you combine two sentences by using a semicolon, replace the period with a semicolon and change the capital letter that begins the second sentence to a small letter. If you wish to use a conjunctive adverb, insert it after the semicolon and usually put a comma after it. (However, usually no comma follows then, now, thus, and soon.) The first letters of ten common conjunctive adverbs make up the acronym HOTSHOT CAT.
Exercise 2  Combining Sentences: Compound

Combine the following pairs of sentences by replacing the first period with a semicolon, changing the capital letter that begins the second sentence to a small letter, and inserting a conjunctive adverb if appropriate. Consider the list of conjunctive adverbs (HOTSHOT CAT and others). Do not use a conjunctive adverb in every sentence.

1. The legendary island of Atlantis has fascinated people for centuries. It probably never existed.

2. According to the Greek writer Plato, the people of Atlantis were very ambitious and warlike. They planned to conquer all of the Mediterranean.

3. Initially, they were successful in subduing areas to the west. They became wealthy.

4. Then the people of Atlantis became proud. They became corrupt and wicked.

5. They were confident and attacked Athens. Athens and its allies defeated the invaders.

6. The story of Atlantis is probably just a tale. Many people have believed it.

7. Some writers have tried to link the legend with such real places as America and the Canary Islands. No link has been found.

8. The Minoan civilization on Crete was destroyed by tidal waves. A similar fate may have befallen Atlantis.
9. Some people speculate about a volcanic explosion on Atlantis.
   A volcanic eruption did destroy part of the island Thera in the Eastern Mediterranean in 1500 B.C.E.

10. Some writers have conjectured that American Indians migrated to the New World by way of Atlantis. Archaeologists dispute that idea.

**Subordination: The Complex Sentence**

Whereas a compound sentence contains independent clauses that are equally important and closely related, a complex sentence combines ideas of unequal value. The following two sentences can be combined as either a compound sentence or a complex sentence, depending on whether the writer thinks the ideas are of equal value.

My neighbors are considerate. They never play loud music.

Combined as a compound sentence, suggesting that the ideas are of equal value, the new sentence looks like this:

My neighbors are considerate, and they never play loud music.

Here are the same two ideas combined as a complex sentence, suggesting that the ideas are of unequal value:

Because my neighbors are considerate, they never play loud music.

Although both the compound and complex forms are correct, the complex form conveys the ideas more precisely in this sentence because one idea does seem to be more important—one idea depends on the other.

Thus if you have two sentences with closely related ideas and one is clearly more important than the other, consider combining them in a complex sentence. Compare these two paragraphs:
■ Version 1 contains six simple sentences, implying that the ideas are of equal value:

(1) I was very upset. (2) The Fourth of July fireworks were especially loud. (3) My dog ran away. (4) The animal control officer made his morning rounds. (5) He found my dog in another part of town. (6) I was relieved.

■ Version 2 consists of two simple sentences and two complex sentences, showing that some ideas are more important than others:

(1) I was very upset. (2) Because the Fourth of July fireworks were especially loud, my dog ran away. (3) When the animal control officer made his morning rounds, he found my dog in another part of town. (4) I was relieved.

You will probably consider Version 2 superior to Version 1. Sentences 2 and 3 are closely related, but 3 is more important. And sentences 4 and 5 are closely related, but 5 is more important. The revision made each pair into a complex sentence.

Although you could combine sentences 1 and 2, the result would be illogical because the wrong idea would be conveyed:

I was very upset because the Fourth of July fireworks were especially loud.

The person was very upset because the dog ran away, not because the fireworks were especially loud.

As you learned in Chapter 5, a complex sentence is composed of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. In combining two independent clauses to write a complex sentence, your first step is to decide on a word that will best show the relationship between the clauses. Words that show the relationship of a dependent clause to an independent one are called subordinating conjunctions. The italicized words in the sentences that follow are subordinating conjunctions. Consider the meaning as well as the placement of each one.

Because the storm hit, the game was canceled.
After the storm passed, the clown dogs began to bark.
When she read her poem, they were moved to fits of hysterics.
He did not volunteer to work on the holiday, although the pay was good.
No one has visited her since she moved into town.
They decided to wait *until* the cows came home.
They refused to work *unless* they were allowed to wear chef’s hats.

*Before* the session ended, all the “hep cats” blew some sweet sounds.

Other subordinating conjunctions include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the main clause</th>
<th>From the dependent clause</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>as</td>
<td>if</td>
<td>&quot;My neighbors are considerate. They never play loud music.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as if</td>
<td>in order that</td>
<td><em>My neighbors, who are</em> considerate, <em>never play loud music.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>even if</td>
<td>provided that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>even though</td>
<td>rather than</td>
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<td>while</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>whereas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Punctuation with Subordinating Conjunctions**

If the dependent clause comes *before* the main clause, set it off with a comma.

Before you dive, be sure there is water in the pool.

If the dependent clause comes *after* or *within* the main clause, set it off only if the clause is not necessary to the meaning of the main clause or if the dependent clause begins with the word *although* or *though*.

Be sure there is water in the pool *before* you dive.
We went home *after* the concert had ended.
He continued, *although* he had painted the cabinet twice.

You have already learned that a relative clause—one that starts with a relative pronoun like *that*, *which*, or *who*—can be the dependent clause in a sentence. If we look at the two sentences we started with, we can see how they can be combined using a relative clause.

My neighbors are considerate. They never play loud music.

Combined as a complex sentence with a relative clause as the dependent clause, the new sentence looks like this:

My neighbors, who *are* considerate, *never play loud music.*

**Punctuation with Relative Pronouns**

Set the dependent clause off with commas when it is not necessary to the sentence. Do not set the clause off if it is necessary for the meaning of the sentence.
Everyone who tries will pass this class. (The dependent clause is necessary because one would not say, “Everyone will pass this class.”)

John, who tries, will pass this class. (The dependent clause is not necessary because one can say, “John will pass this class.”)

The relative pronoun which usually refers to things. The word which almost always indicates that a clause is not necessary for the meaning of the sentence. Therefore, a clause beginning with which is almost always set off by commas.

My car, which is ten years old, has a flat tire.

The relative pronoun that also usually refers to things. However, the word that almost always indicates that the clause is necessary for the meaning of the sentence. Therefore, a clause beginning with that is not set off by commas.

The car that has a flat tire is ten years old.

The relative pronouns who and whom, as well as whoever and whomever, usually refer to people. Clauses that begin with those relative pronouns are not set off by commas if they are necessary for the meaning of the sentence; if they are not necessary, they are set off.

A person who has a way with words is often quoted. (necessary for the meaning of the sentence)

My uncle, whom I quote often, has a way with words. (not necessary for the meaning of the sentence)

Exercise 3 Combining Sentences: Complex

Combine the following pairs of sentences into one complex sentence. Insert an appropriate subordinating conjunction or relative pronoun, add or fix punctuation, and make other minor changes as needed. Sentences that should be combined by using a relative pronoun are indicated.

1. (relative pronoun) The freeway congestion was under study.

   The problem occurred every Friday at noon.

2. The vacationers had a good time. The bears destroyed a few tents and ate people’s food.
3. The teenagers loved their senior prom. The band played badly.

4. Farmers gathered for miles around. Jeff had grown a fifty-pound cucumber.

5. Back-seat drivers make unwanted suggestions in the nag-proof model. They can be ejected from the vehicle.

6. (relative pronoun) The marriage counselor gave bad advice. He charged only half price.

7. (relative pronoun) The robots would not do their work. They needed fresh batteries.

8. The hurricane was expected to hit during the night. The residents checked their flashlights.

9. The ice sculptor displayed his work in the dining hall. The customers applauded.

10. Someone stole the artwork of ice. No evidence was found.

**Coordination and Subordination: The Compound-Complex Sentence**

At times you may want to show the relationship of three or more ideas within one sentence. If that relationship involves two or more main ideas and one or more supporting ideas, the combination can be stated in a compound-complex sentence [two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses].

Before he learned how to operate a computer,

dependent clause
he had trouble with his typewritten assignments,

independent clause

but now he produces clean, attractive material.

independent clause

In our previous discussion of the complex sentence, we presented this group of six sentences:

I was very upset. The Fourth of July fireworks were especially loud. My dog ran away. The animal control officer made his morning rounds. He found my dog in another part of town. I was relieved.

We then converted the group of six sentences to four:

I was very upset. Because the Fourth of July fireworks were especially loud, my dog ran away. When the animal control officer made his morning rounds, he found my dog in another part of town. I was relieved.

If we wanted to show an even closer relationship of ideas we could combine the two complex sentences in this way (the italicized sentence is compound-complex):

I was very upset. Because the Fourth of July fireworks were especially loud, my dog ran away; but when the animal control officer made his morning rounds, he found my dog in another part of town. I was relieved.

Punctuation of Complicated Compound or Compound-Complex Sentences

If a compound or compound-complex sentence has one or more commas in the first clause, you may want to use a semicolon before the coordinating conjunction between the two clauses. Its purpose is to show the reader very clearly the division between the two independent clauses. The preceding example illustrates this use of the semicolon.

Exercise 4 Combining Sentences: Compound-Complex

Combine each group of sentences into one compound-complex sentence. Use the rules of sentence combining and punctuation discussed in this chapter.
1. Helen Keller suffered a serious childhood illness. She became blind and deaf. At first her parents did not know what to do.

2. Her parents would not give up despite discouraging advice. They advertised for a teacher. A tutor named Anne Sullivan agreed to help.

3. Young Helen began to discover the world through her sense of touch. She learned the alphabet. She started connecting words with objects.

4. Her physical condition was irreversible. Her progress was rapid. In three years she could read Braille.

5. She could not talk. She used sign language for speech. She used a special typewriter to write.

6. She reached the age of ten. She took speech lessons from a teacher of the deaf. In six years she could speak well enough to be understood.

7. She attended college. She still needed help. Anne Sullivan continued as her tutor and interpreter.

8. She graduated from college with honors. She became involved in programs to help the deaf and blind communicate. She wrote books and articles about problems of the disabled.
9. The effects of World War II presented special problems. Helen Keller helped disabled people in other countries. She helped soldiers blinded in the war.

10. Helen Keller died in 1968. She had an international reputation as a humanitarian. Her books had been translated into more than fifty languages.

**Other Ways to Combine Ideas**

In this chapter you have learned how to combine simple sentences into compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences that show the coordination and subordination of ideas. There are other methods of combining ideas. Here are four you may want to use in your own writing:

1. Use an **appositive**, which is a noun or a noun phrase that immediately follows a noun or pronoun and renames it.

   Susan is the leading scorer on the team. Susan is a quick and strong player.

   Susan, *a quick and strong player*, is the leading scorer on the team.

2. Use a **prepositional phrase**, a preposition followed by a noun or pronoun object.

   Dolly Parton wrote a song about a coat. The coat had many colors.

   Dolly Parton wrote a song about a *coat of many colors*.

3. Drop the subject in the sentence that follows, and combine the sentences.

   Some items are too damaged for recycling. They must be disposed of.

   Some items are too damaged for recycling *and* must be disposed of.

4. Use a **participial phrase**, a group of words that includes a participle, which is a verbal that usually ends in *-ing* or *-ed*.

   John rowed smoothly. He reached the shore.

   *Rowing smoothly*, John reached the shore.
Do not omit words that are needed to make your sentences clear and logical. Of the many types of undesirable construction in which necessary words are omitted, the following are the most common:

1. **Subjects.** Do not omit a necessary subject in a sentence with two verbs.
   
   **ILLOGICAL** The cost of the car was $12,000 but would easily last me through college. *(subject of last)*
   
   **LOGICAL** The cost of the car was $12,000, but the car would easily last me through college.

2. **Verbs.** Do not omit verbs that are needed because of a change in the number of the subject or a change of tense.
   
   **ILLOGICAL** The bushes were trimmed and the grass mowed. *(verb of grass)*
   
   **LOGICAL** The bushes were trimmed and the grass was mowed.
   
   **ILLOGICAL** True honesty always has and always will be admired by most people. *(tense)*
   
   **LOGICAL** True honesty always has been and always will be admired by most people.

3. **That as a conjunction.** The conjunction *that* should not be omitted from a dependent clause if there is danger of misreading the sentence.
   
   **MISLEADING** We believed Eric, if not stopped, would hurt himself. *(that after believed)*
   
   **CLEAR** We believed that Eric, if not stopped, would hurt himself.

4. **Prepositions.** Do not omit prepositions in idiomatic phrases, in expressions of time, and in parallel phrases.
   
   **ILLOGICAL** Weekends the campus is deserted. *(time)*
   
   **LOGICAL** During weekends the campus is deserted.
   
   **ILLOGICAL** I have neither love nor patience with untrained dogs. *(parallel phrases)*
   
   **LOGICAL** I have neither love for nor patience with untrained dogs.
   
   **ILLOGICAL** Glenda’s illness was something we heard only after her recovery. *(about after heard)*

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Glenda’s illness was something we heard about only after her recovery.

**Exercise 5 Correcting Omissions**

Identify the kinds of omissions by writing one of the following words in the blank to the left: subject, verb, conjunction, preposition. Insert the necessary words in the sentences.

1. Charles had neither love nor patience with small pets.
2. Because he was careless, a branch caught on the trigger of his gun, and went off.
3. In the newspaper, the radio, and TV, the story was the same.
4. We saw the car, if not stopped, would hit the tree.
5. Because Jim had not worked that summer, money was scarce in the fall and expenses burdensome.
6. Harry’s ignorance was one of the things that we learned on the trip.
7. We believed the lie, if not revealed, would harm people.
8. The truck was creeping up the hill, and had no thought at all of the traffic behind.
9. I do not believe and never have that a person’s life is not his or her own responsibility.
10. When Joe got his second wind, his breathing slowed, and was able to go on running without fatigue.
Variety in Sentences: Types, Order, Length, Beginnings

Sentences can be written in a variety of ways to achieve freshness and clarity. Much of this polishing takes place during revision. Here are a few techniques for the main variations.

**Types**
You have learned that all four types of sentences are sound. Your task as a writer is to decide which one to use for a particular thought. That decision may not be made until you revise your composition. Then you can choose on the basis of the relationship of ideas:

- **Simple**: a single idea
- **Compound**: two closely related ideas
- **Complex**: one idea more important than the other
- **Compound-complex**: a combination of the two parts

These types were all covered in Chapter 5. This chapter provides further practice, as you combine sentences.

**Order**
You will choose the order of parts and information according to what you want to emphasize. Typically the most emphatic location is at the end of any unit.

**Length**
Uncluttered and direct, short sentences commonly draw attention. Because that focus occurs only when they stand out from longer sentences, however, you would usually avoid a series of short sentences.

**Beginnings**
A long series of sentences with each beginning containing a subject followed by a verb may become monotonous. Consider beginning sentences in different ways:

- **With a prepositional phrase**: In the distance a dog barked.
- **With a transitional connective (conjunctive adverb) such as then, however, or therefore**: Then the game was over.
- **With a coordinating conjunction such as and or but**: But no one moved for three minutes.
- **With a dependent clause**: Although he wanted a new Corvette, he settled for a used Ford Taurus.
With an adverb: Carefully he removed the thorn from the lion’s paw.

**Exercise 6** Providing Sentence Variety

*Revise the following passage to achieve better sentence variety through changes in types of sentences, order of information, length of sentences, and beginnings of sentences. Also, combine sentences for improved expression. Compare your revisions with those of others in your class. There is no single correct way of making these changes.*

**Power Rangers to the Rescue**  
*Leewan Yeomans*

I do promotions on the weekends for TV’s “Power Rangers.” I’m Trini. She’s supposed to be Chinese. I’m Chinese-American, the kids think I’m the real Ranger when I remove my mask. I’ve never felt very much like a Ranger except for one occasion. It was a weekend promotion, held at a park. We were doing our routine. I looked around and saw a little boy collapse. He had probably been in distress for a while. Wearing the mask, I could hardly see anything. Anyway, this little boy was lying there, thrashing around and trying to throw up. No one was doing anything. The Pink Ranger started running around trying to find the child’s parents. I ran over when no one came to the aid of the boy, took off my mask, and put my finger in his mouth to clear his throat. There I found the problem. He had been chewing on, or maybe blowing, a long balloon. He had swallowed it. I pulled it out of his throat. It was almost a foot long. The whole spectacle must have looked like a magic trick. The child still wasn’t breathing well. The paramedics were called. They quickly helped him back to good health. His parents, who lived across the street, came to
carry him home. We Rangers put our masks back on. The audience cheered us as if we had planned the whole scene. We resumed our routine. It was just another day of work for the Power Rangers.

**Chapter Review**

**Exercise 7** Combining Sentences

*Combine each pair of sentences into a single sentence by using any pattern.*

1. Cobras are among the most feared of all snakes. They are not the deadliest of all snakes.

2. Cobras do not coil before they strike. They cannot strike over a long distance.

3. Cobras do not have a hood. They flatten their neck by moving their ribs when they are nervous or frightened.

4. Cobras inject venom with their fangs. They spit venom at their victims.

5. Human beings will not die from the venom that has been spit. It can cause blindness if it is not washed from the eyes.

6. A person can die from a cobra bite. Death may come in only a few hours.

7. Snake charmers have long worked with cobras. They use a snake, a basket, and a flute.
8. The snakes cannot *hear* the music. They respond to the rhythmic movements of the charmers.

9. The snake charmers are hardly ever in danger of being bitten. They defang the cobras or sew their mouths shut.

10. Most cobras will flee from people. They attack if they are cornered or if they are guarding their eggs.

11. The tiny mongoose is the enemy of the cobra. It uses its sharp teeth to kill the cobra.

**Exercise 8 Combining Sentences**

*Combine each pair or group of sentences into a single sentence by using any pattern.*

1. Romeo and Juliet were young. They fell in love.

2. Their families were feuding. Romeo and Juliet decided to run away.

3. They tried to trick their families. Their plans failed. They both died.

4. The contestant spun the wheel one more time. Vanna White clapped her hands with glee.

5. Only one letter remained. Pat Sajak encouraged the contestant.

6. The wheel stopped. The contestant lost his turn.

8. Several tabloids have reported that Elvis has not left us. He has been sighted in several parts of the country and even on other planets.

9. The tabloids report that the King is just tired and wants privacy. They give credit to unnamed reliable sources.

10. The central character of The Old Man and the Sea is Santiago. Santiago is a fisherman with a string of bad luck.

11. He catches a fish. He loses most of it to sharks.

12. He struggles courageously. He achieves a moral victory.

13. Santiago is a true hero. He obeys his code.

**Exercise 9** Combining Sentences

Use appropriate methods to combine sentences as needed. Add and delete words sparingly.

Muhammad Ali was arguably the greatest heavyweight boxing champion. He won the title on four occasions. He loved to perform for the press. He made up sayings and poems about himself and his opponents. He once said he would “float like a butterfly and sting like a bee.” Ali announced that he would win each fight. He even named the round. He became a Black Muslim.
He refused induction into the armed services. He was convicted of a crime for having done so. As a result he lost his championship. Later the decision was reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court. He won back the championship by defeating George Foreman in 1974. In 1978 he lost it to Leon Spinks. He regained it the next year. He retired in 1980. He soon returned to the ring once more to fight for the championship. He quit for good.