

## Combining Sentences

If you continually use short sentences in your writing, your paragraphs will sound very choppy. Read this paragraph and notice how it sounds.

It was my birthday. I ask for a bike. My parents bought me a red bike. It had white strips on the fenders. I like to ride my bike everywhere. I like to ride on smooth payment best. I am not allowed to ride on the sidewalk. People walk on the side walk. If I have time. I ride on the bike trail in the park.

To make your writing more interesting, you can combine the short sentences to make longer sentences. The longer sentences can be either **compound** or **complex**. Read the revised paragraph below. Notice how the paragraph flows much better with longer sentences.

It was my birthday, so I ask for a bike. My parents bought me a red bike, and it had white strips on the fenders. I like to ride my bike everywhere, but I like to ride on smooth payment best. I am not allowed to ride on the sidewalk because people walk on the sidewalk. Whenever I have time, I ride on the bike trail in the park.

Did you notice the kind of changes that were made in the second paragraph? **Conjunctions** and **commas** were used to connect the sentences.

What are conjunctions? The most common conjunctions used in compound sentences are:

**and, as, but, or, so**

When you make a **compound** sentence you are joining two or more simple sentences together with a conjunction and a comma. If you took the conjunction away, the sentences would be complete and they would still make sense. Look at this example:

Sentence 1: I like to ride my bike everywhere.

Sentence 2: I like to ride on smooth payment best.

Compound sentence: I like to ride my bike everywhere,  
**but** I like to ride on smooth payment best.

**Complex** sentences use conjunctions and sometimes commas also. However, complex sentences don't just divide into neat, complete, simple sentences if you take out the conjunctions. In complex sentences the conjunction is used to join together **clauses**.

These conjunctions are used most often in complex sentences:

**after, although, because, before, until, since, when, whenever, while**

What is a clause? **A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb.** Sometimes clauses are complete short sentences, but **in a complex sentence at least one of them will depend on the conjunction for its meaning.** This means if you take the conjunction away, the sentence won't divide into complete units that make sense by themselves. Look at these examples:

Clause 1: I am not allowed to ride on the sidewalk.

Clause 2: People walk on the sidewalk.

Complex sentence: I am not allowed to ride on the sidewalk **because** people walk on the sidewalk.

Clause 1: If I have time.

Clause 2: I ride on the bike trail in the park.

Complex sentence: **Whenever** I have time, I ride on the bike trail in the park.

Revise these paragraphs using compound and complex sentences.

Paragraph 1: It was a dark and stormy night. The wind was high. The trees waved and crashed against the barn. I looked around me and saw that I wasn't alone. A man stood behind me. He was tall. He was mean. He had a knife. It was shining in the moonlight. It was long and slender. He reached back. He stabbed with it. I jumped out of the way. I ran away.

Paragraph 2: Tom prefers baseball to basketball. Baseball seems more interesting to Tom. Tom feels baseball is a gentleman's sport. Baseball is more structured than basketball. Baseball requires athletes to use more skill than aggression when playing. Tom respects baseball players the most because of this.

Paragraph 2: There was a storm. Old trees thrashed in the wind. It was night and the electricity went off. The storm blew out the electricity. It began to rain. Hail battered the windows. The rain blew sideways in the wind. I was alone.

## Five conventional ways of putting sentences together.

1. The most common are **conjunctions: and, but, or, so, (nor, yet, for) .**

**Rule:**

Usually two independent clauses (in effect, sentences) are joined by a conjunction, **but** a comma must be placed before the conjunction.

2. The most useful are **adverb clauses (although, when, because, since, until, if, etc.).**

These words convert an entire sentence into an adverb. For example: When these words convert an entire sentence into an adverb . . .

**Rule:**

**When you use an initial adverb clause,** place a comma after it.

Do not use a comma **when you use a final adverb clause.**

Notice the rule also illustrates that adverb clauses can move around in a sentence.

Adverbs are really the only parts of speech that are easy to shuffle in this way.

3. The hardest to remember how to punctuate is **sentence connectors: (however, moreover, furthermore, as a matter of fact, additionally, etc.)** The term for these is adverbial conjunctions, so they can also move around in sentences.

**Rules:**

Don't hesitate to use sentence connectors; **however**, remember to surround the connector with punctuation.

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Don't hesitate to use sentence connectors; remember to surround the connector with punctuation, **however.**

4. The shortest is the semicolon: ;

**Rule:**

Use semicolons sparingly; use them to connect sentences connected in meaning.

And remember that a semicolon is not the one used to introduce a list. The colon (:) is.

5. The powerful one, the **verbal**. Think about employing some of the thousands of verbs in sentence combining.

**Quasi-rule:**

**Poised at the beginning of a sentence,** the verbal phrase was followed by a comma.

Or an example closer to home: The paper is graded by a computer. The paper is then ready for student revision.

Could become: Graded by a computer, the *paper* is then ready for student revision.

Be careful not to mislead or confuse the reader; check to make sure there is a referent for the verbal construction in the sentence (italicized in the sentence above). And contrast that sentence with the one below where the reference may be ambiguous:

Graded by a computer, the teacher can then return the papers.

## SENTENCE COMBINING

Combining sentences allows writers to avoid unnecessary repetition, provide emphasis, and improve sentence variety. Here are a few of the many ways to combine sentences.

1. Combine by using a compound sentence or complex sentence. (Also see #3 below.)

John is an excellent cook. I like to eat at his house.

John is an excellent cook, so I like to eat at his house. (compound sentence)

I like to eat at John's house, for he is an excellent cook. (compound sentence)

Since John is an excellent cook, I like to eat at his house. (complex sentence)

I like to eat at John's house since he is an excellent cook. (complex sentence)

(Note: The two sentences above contain adverb clauses.)

2. Combine by making a list.

Ann is a good baseball player. She is a good swimmer. She is a good golfer.

Ann is a good baseball player, swimmer, and golfer.

3. Combine by using an appositive or relative clause (adjective clause).

Jason is an Eagle Scout. He is also an honor student.

Jason, an Eagle scout, is also an honor student. (appositive)

Jason, who is an Eagle Scout, is also an honor student. (relative clause)

(Note: A sentence with a relative clause is also a complex sentence.)

4. Combine by using a past or present participle phrase or compound predicate.

Kate was finished with the report. She left for the game.

Finished with the report, Kate left for the game. (past participle phrase)

Kate, finished with the report, left for the game. (past participle phrase)

Having finished the report, Kate left for the game. (present participle phrase)

Kate, having finished the report, left for the game. (present participle phrase)

Kate finished the report and left for the game. (compound predicate)

**Directions:** Combine the following sentences into one coherent sentence. For this exercise, do not write any compound sentences. The first one is done for you. Three options are shown though you need to do only one for each of your revisions.

1. My cousin enjoys classical music. She enjoys jazz. She is a music major.  
My cousin, who enjoys classical music and jazz, is a music major.  
A music major, my cousin enjoys classical music and jazz.  
My cousin, a music major, enjoys classical music and jazz.
2. Helen was walking to church downtown. She saw a car accident. She ran to the nearest pay phone to call for help.
3. Martin was sick. He was unable to attend the party. The party was for his sister. It was her birthday.
4. I waited for the bus. I read a magazine while I waited. I also read a newspaper.
5. Sinclair is one of the largest community colleges in the United States. It is considered one of the best in the United States. It has many innovative programs.
6. Mohammad has been in America for two years. He speaks English. He speaks English well. He is originally from Jordan.
7. My sister is a math teacher. She has been a math teacher for ten years. Sometimes she wishes she was a lawyer. She likes to argue.
8. My friend is in the hospital. He was painting his house. He fell off a ladder.
9. The student was removed from the room. He was yelling at the teacher. He was yelling at the students. The student was removed by two security guards.
10. The president of the college resigned. She moved to Canada. She hoped to write and relax for awhile.

# Sentence-Combining Exercises

**Combine each set of short sentences and fragments into one sentence.**

1. I always order cheese fries. The reason why is because they're my favorite.
2. Bob was my boyfriend. That was in high school. We dated for about eight months. Before I met Mike.
3. The tree fell on the house. This was a sycamore. Because of the high winds. But my grandmother wasn't hurt.
4. My dog's name is George. He is a Golden Retriever. He loves to play Frisbee. Loves to swim, too.
5. My parents gave me a car. That is why I'm able to afford to go to college. Still, I work part-time. I work at Wal-Mart. I'm a cashier.

**Combine these six pairs of sentences using the coordinating conjunctions listed below. Use each conjunction only one time.**

***and, but, or, so, yet, nor***

6. Some students stay on the sidewalks. Some students cut across the grass.
7. Students have to park far from their classrooms. They are often late for class.
8. Trash cans have been placed all over campus. Students still throw garbage on the ground.
9. The administration promised to improve dining hall service. The quality of the food is actually worse this year.
10. These students do not respect the feelings of others. They don't seem to respect themselves.
11. We must stand up for our rights today. We may find ourselves with no rights at all.

**Combine the same sentences above using the subordinating conjunctions listed below. Again, use each conjunction only one time.**

***unless, because, even though, while, although, though***

12. Some students stay on the sidewalks. Some students cut across the grass.
13. Students have to park far from their classrooms. They are often late for class.
14. Trash cans have been placed all over campus. Students still throw garbage on the ground.
15. The administration promised to improve dining hall service. The quality of the food is actually worse this year.
16. These students do not respect the feelings of others. They do seem to respect themselves.
17. We must stand up for our rights today. We may find ourselves with no rights at all.