

What, Why, and How?

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STYLE:

Sentence Combining

WHAT IS SENTENCE COMBINING?

Trying to achieve simplicity in your writing does not mean writing only in short sentences. If your essays are filled with short sentences, they will read as choppy and the relationships between the sentences will not be as clear. Combining or joining sentences can convey your ideas more fluidly and logically. However, you also want rhythm in your writing which can be created through varied sentence length and structure. Include short sentences for impact.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Sentence combining helps you to...

- avoid the monotony of sentences that are brief and of equal length.
- draw attention to the ideas in the paper not to the repetitive and simple sentence structure.
- create rhythm through varied sentence length and structure.
- show the reader the relationships that exist among ideas of different importance.
- experiment with different methods of putting words together. Because there are countless ways to build sentences, the goal is not to find the one "correct" combination but to consider different arrangements to find the most effective.

HOW DO I DO IT?

Connections
In the Grammar chapter, see also "Appositives," "Coordinators," and "Subordinators."

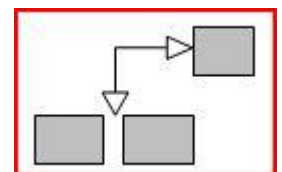
There are 3 main methods used to combine sentences:

I. **Coordinate** sentences when you want to equally emphasize the sentences.



II. **Subordinate** sentences when you want to emphasize one sentence over another.

III. **Embed** words, phrases and/or sentences to integrate ideas within sentences.



First, to understand how to combine sentences, we must have an understanding of the basic components of a sentence.

A **basic or simple sentence** contains a subject and a verb and can stand alone.

Examples: Fish swim. Dogs bark. People talk, laugh, and sing.

PRACTICE

In the following sentences, underline the subject (the doer of the action) once, and the verb (the action) twice.

- (a) Schools educate.
- (b) Better funding should be given to schools.
- (c) Students learn best in environments with quality materials and instructors.

To combine basic or simple sentences, there are 3 main methods used:

I. **Coordinate** sentences when you want to equally emphasize the sentences.



Coordination means to CONNECT two or more sentences. You join sentences through coordination when you want to give equal emphasis to each sentence.

Two ways to coordinate sentences:

- 1) Join sentences using a comma and conjunction (**For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So**)
Example: I like reading poetry, **but** I don't always understand it.
- 2) Combine related sentences using a semi-colon → **;**
Example: I like reading poetry; I don't always understand it.

PRACTICE

Coordinate the following sentences by using one of the above methods.

- (d) Schools educate. Better funding should be given to schools.
- (e) Students learn best in environments with quality materials and instructors. Increased funding is difficult for schools to secure.
- (f) Better prepared students produce smarter citizens. More educated citizens raise the overall quality of a society.

II. **Subordinate** sentences when you want to emphasize one sentence over another.



First, to subordinate you have to know some subordinators:

| Subordinators | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Contrast/Concession | although, while, even though, even if, whereas, though |
| Cause | because, since |
| Effect/ Result | so that, in that, in order that |
| Condition | if, unless, provided that |
| Time | after, before, as soon as, since, when, while, until, as |

Subordination means to CONNECT one or more sentences with a subordinator. You join sentences through subordination when you want to give emphasis to one sentence over another. The sentence that begins with a subordinator receives LESS emphasis.

Two ways to subordinate sentences:

- 1) Join two sentences using a subordinator.
Example: Jenson spent a year traveling the world **because** he got fired from his job
- 2) Begin the sentence with a subordinator, which gives less emphasis to the beginning subordinated sentence.
Example: **Because** Jenson got fired from his job, he spent a year traveling the world.

Punctuation Note:

When a subordinator introduces a sentence, put a comma after the first clause.

Example: *After* she went to bed, she started to hear noises downstairs.

But if the subordinator comes in the middle of a clause, you don't need to set it off with a comma.

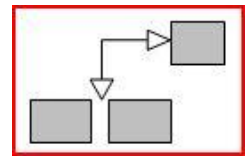
Example: She started to hear noises downstairs *after* she went to bed.



Subordinate *the following sentences by using one of the above methods.*

- (g) Schools educate. Better funding should be given to schools.
- (h) Students learn best in environments with quality materials and instructors. Increased funding is difficult for schools to secure.
- (i) We are going to have a better educated populace. State funding priorities are adjusted to provide larger budgets for school.

III. **Embed** words, phrases and/or sentences to integrate ideas within sentences.



First, to embed sentences, you want to be familiar with some words that are commonly used to embed sentences. Words such as:

who, whom, whose, which, that, when, where

Example: She had a goat. She loved it very much.

Embedded: She had a goat that she loved very much.

Example: His favorite girlfriend had just received an anonymous phone call. She was coming over later that evening.

Embedded: His favorite girlfriend, who was coming over later that evening, had just received an anonymous phone call.

Ways to embed sentences:

- 1) When the subject of the sentence is repeated in more than one sentence, look to embed.
Example: Audrey loves traveling. Audrey was leaving for China in May. She works with me.
Embedded: Audrey, a woman I work with who loves traveling, was leaving for China.
- 2) For whole sentences used to give little pieces of information, look to embed.
Example: I wanted to give Craig money to buy me tickets. Craig is my sister's boyfriend.
Embedded: I wanted to give Craig, my sister's boyfriend, money to buy me tickets.

PRACTICE

Combine each grouping of sentences into one sentence using embedding.

- (j) Pancho came to the party. He is Jose's cousin. He graduated from Stanford. He was top in his class.
- (k) The clown was juggling for twelve hours in the circus tent. The clown was exhausted. The circus tent was crowded. He was juggling next to the live animals acts. The animals smelled badly.
- (l) After 10 years, Suzanne achieved her goal. Her goal was to get a PhD from Berkeley. Her PhD was in English Literature. Her degree had an emphasis in French literature. The 10 years were grueling. Suzanne is my neighbor.

PRACTICE

Sentence Combining: Apply the different sentence combining techniques you have learned to make this paragraph more fluid.

Paragraph 1:

The Boston Red Sox were three games down. The Red Sox had to win the next four games to advance. Fans were worried. Boston had not won a World Series since 1918. No team had ever come back in the playoffs from a three-game deficit. All of the fans knew this. Red Sox fans watched anxiously as the fourth game of the ALCS began. Yankees fans watched confidently. They also knew that anything could happen. People wanted to watch a good series. They did not expect it to be such a nail-biter! David Roberts stole second base. This move would be remembered as the turning point of the series. Nobody believed the Red Sox would win that year. The Red Sox won that year. The Yankees would not win the World Series for another five years. In 2009, the Yankees won the World Series.

Now let's try **de-combining** sentences so we can appreciate the conciseness of well combined sentences and how it is easier to see the relationship among ideas when they are joined. Break this sentence down into its root sentences:

Paragraph 2:

Here's a thesis from an essay written on Malcolm X's "Learning to Read":

The characteristics that he shows of not giving up even in the face of overwhelming odds and applying good old-fashioned, and often tedious and repetitive, hard work and persistence have become frighteningly rare in the U.S. today where people have bloated senses of entitlement.

ANSWERS

POSSIBLE ANSWERS FOR EXERCISES FROM SENTENCE COMBINING SECTION

UNDERLYING SUBJECTS AND VERBS IN A SENTENCE:

In the following sentences, underline the subject (the doer of the action) once, and the verb (the action) twice.

- (a) Schools educate.
- (b) Better funding should be given to schools.
- (c) Students learn best in environments with quality materials and instructors.

COORDINATING SENTENCES: (possible answers—answer can vary)

(d) Schools educate, **so** better funding should be given to schools.

OR Schools educate; **therefore** better funding should be given to schools.

(e) Students learn best in environments with quality materials and instructors, **but** increased funding is difficult for schools to secure.

OR Students learn best in environments with quality materials and instructors; **however** increased funding to is difficult for schools to secure.

(f) Better prepared students produce smarter citizens, **and** more educated citizens raise the overall quality of a society. OR Better prepared students produce smarter citizens; more educated citizens raise the overall quality of a society.

SUBORDINATING SENTENCES: (possible answers—answer can vary)

- (g) **Because** schools educate, better funding should be given to schools.
- (h) **Although** students learn best in environments with quality materials and instructors, increased funding is difficult for schools to secure.
- (i) We are going to have a better educated populace **when** state funding priorities are adjusted to provide larger budgets for school.

EMBEDDING SENTENCES: (possible answers—answer can vary)

Combine each grouping of sentences into one sentence using embedding.

- (j) Pancho, Jose's cousin who graduated from Stanford top of his class, came to the party.
- (k) The exhausted clown was juggling for twelve hours in the crowded circus tent next to the live animal acts that smelled badly.
- (l) After 10 grueling years, my neighbor Suzanne, achieved her goal, which was getting a PhD from Berkeley
in English Literature with an emphasis in French literature.

GENERAL SENTENCE COMBINING EXERCISES: (possible answers—answer can vary)**Paragraph 1: Sentence Combining**

Three games down, the Boston Red Sox had to win the next four to advance, and fans were worried because they had not won a World Series since 1918. No team had ever come back from a three-game deficit. As the fourth game began, Red Sox fans watched anxiously while Yankee fans watched confidently. Anything could happen, and people wanted a good series, but no one expected such a nail biter! David Roberts stole second base, the series turning point. No one believed the Red Sox would win, but they did. The Yankees would not win the World Series for another 5 years until 2009.



ANSWERS

Paragraph 2: Sentence De-Combining (1 sentence into 15 sentences)

The characteristics are rare.

He shows not giving up.

He doesn't give up in the face of overwhelming odds.

He shows applying good hard work.

He shows applying good persistence.

He shows applying old-fashioned hard work.

He show applying old-fashioned persistence.

He shows tedious hard work.

He shows tedious persistence.

He shows repetitive hard work.

He shows repetitive persistence.

They have become frighteningly rare.

Rare in the U.S.

Rare today.

People have bloated senses of entitlement.