

Combining Sentences

The way in which you construct your sentences can help clarify important points for the reader. It can also help you avoid choppy sentences and write smoothly.

Methods of combining sentences with equally important ideas:

1. Use a comma plus a coordinating conjunction. Use the FANBOYS trick to help remember these: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

Example: Herb wanted to go to San Francisco. He could not afford the airfare.

Combined: Herb wanted to go to San Francisco, **but** he could not afford the airfare.

2. Use a semicolon plus a conjunctive adverb followed by a comma (moreover, nonetheless, furthermore, however, therefore, consequently, also)

Example: We were hungry. We left early for lunch.

Combined: We were hungry; **therefore**, we left early for lunch.

Methods of combining sentences to emphasize one idea over another:

1. Use a subordinating conjunction to introduce the less important idea (after, although, as, as if, because, before, even though, if, in order that, rather, since, so that, than, though, unless, that, when, while, until, whether, while, where).

Example: I was riding my bike on the path. I saw a huge snake.

Combined: **When** I was riding on the path, I saw a huge snake. *Combined:* I saw a huge snake **when** I was riding on the path.

In these examples, the main point of the sentence is that “I saw a snake,” not that “I was riding my bike.”

2. Use an appositive (a word or phrase that renames a noun or pronoun) to subordinate an idea.

Example: I contacted Mr. Dashell. He is the shop teacher at my college. *Combined:* I contacted Mr. Dashell, **the shop teacher** at my college.

In this example, the main point of the sentence is that “I contacted Mr. Dashell,” not that he is the shop teacher at the college.

3. Use a participial phrase (verb + ing or verb + ed/en) and a comma to subordinate ideas.

Example: The dog snapped at the woman. She was taunting him.

Combined: **Provoked** by her taunts, the dog snapped at the woman.

Combined: The dog snapped at the woman, **provoked** by her taunts.

In these examples, the main point is that the dog snapped, not that the woman taunted.