

# Sentence Combining Techniques

Sometimes students believe that a sentence can contain only one piece of information. As a result, they create simple sentences which are often choppy and incoherent. Read the following sentences:

Billy is an unhappy child. He has many problems. He does poorly in school. He does not get along with other children.

Notice how each sentence adds one more piece of information. This method results in a number of simple sentences that lack coherence. By using sentence combining techniques, these sentences can be written as one coherent sentence.

With his many problems – doing poorly in school and not getting along with other children – Billy is an unhappy child.

OR

Billy is an unhappy child because he has many problems, such as doing poorly in school and not getting along with other children.

Both of the above revisions are more effective than the original three sentences because the revisions are coherent and show the relationships of ideas to each other.

Learning the following sentence combining techniques will help you develop efficient and effective sentences.

I. **Adjectives** can be joined in one of two ways.

A. Form a list of adjectives joined by commas.

Example: The dress was old. It was also dirty and torn.  
Combined: The dress was old, dirty, and torn.

B. Place two adjectives after a noun to modify it, and enclose the adjectives within commas.

Example: My best friend has a great personality. She is outgoing and energetic.  
Compound: My best friend, outgoing and energetic, has a great personality.

II. **Appositives** or noun phrases – rename or define another noun. Enclose the appositive within commas because it adds nonessential information.

Example: Mary is a teacher at Malverne Elementary School. She is also an avid jogger.  
Combined: Mary, an avid jogger, is a teacher at Malverne Elementary School.

In the above combined sentence, the noun phrase, an avid jogger, is an appositive that describes Mary's hobby. NOTICE THE PLACEMENT OF THE COMMAS.

OR

Combined: Mary, a teacher at Malverne Elementary School, is also an avid jogger.

In this combined sentence, the noun phrase, a teacher at Malverne Elementary School, is an appositive that states Mary's occupation. NOTICE THE PLACEMENT OF THE COMMAS.

III. A **Relative-Pronoun Clause** can serve in the same way as an appositive. It gives additional information about a noun by renaming it, defining it, or describing it. These clauses, which begin with who, which, that, whose, or whom, are dependent clauses. **MAKE SURE THESE CLAUSES IMMEDIATELY FOLLOW THE NOUN THAT THEY MODIFY.**

Example: Because of the cutbacks in funds to public education, the new school will not be built until 1995. The new school will be home to six hundred students.

Combined: Because of the cutbacks in funds to public education, the new school, which will be home to six hundred students, will not be built until 1995.

In the combined sentence, the relative pronoun clause, which will be home to six hundred students, describes the new school. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CLAUSE IS PLACED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE WORD THAT IT MODIFIES.

**NOTE:** Relative pronoun clauses can be either **essential** or **nonessential** modifiers.

--As a general rule, if the noun to which the clause refers is a **PROPER NOUN**, the clause is considered **nonessential** to the meaning of the sentence and should be set off by commas.

Example: The Bronx Zoo, which is in New York, is a popular tourist attraction.

In the above example, the relative-pronoun clause refers to a **proper noun**, The Bronx Zoo; therefore, the clause is **nonessential** and must be enclosed within commas.

--As a general rule, if the noun to which the clause refers is a **COMMON NOUN**, the clause is considered **essential** to the meaning of the sentence and should **not** be set off by commas.

Example: The zoo which is in New York is popular.

In the above example, the relative-pronoun clause refers to a **common noun**, The zoo; therefore, the clause is therefore, the clause is **essential** to identify which zoo is popular and should **not** be set off by commas.

IV. **Participles** (present and past) act as adjectives to *modify a noun*. (A **present participle** is formed by addition **ing** to the base form of the verb. A **past participle** is usually formed by adding **ed** to the base form of the verb.) **REMEMBER: THESE PARTICIPLES ARE NOT ACTING AS THE VERBS OF A SENTENCE.**

Example: Sally was jogging around the block. A dog ran after Sally. The dog wore a muzzle.

Combined: While jogging around the block, Sally was chased by a muzzled dog.

In the combined sentence, While jogging around the block, is a **present participle phrase** *modifying the noun* Sally, and muzzled is a **past participle** *modifying the noun* dog.

V **Coordination** creates a COMPOUND SENTENCE (two or more independent clauses). Create a compound sentence by placing a comma and conjunction or a semicolon between the independent clauses.

**Conjunctions: FANBOYS**

**For** shows cause.

She was late. She was in an accident.  
She was late, **for** she was in an accident.

**And** shows addition.

I went to the park. I fed the pigeons.  
I went to the park, **and** I fed the pigeons.

**Nor** shows a negative choice.

He did not do his homework. He did not study.  
He did not do his homework, **nor** did he study.

**But** shows contrast or contradiction.

I studied for the test. I still didn't pass.  
I studied for this test, **but** I still didn't pass.

**Or** shows a choice.

We may go to the zoo. We may go to the park.  
We may go to the zoo, **or** we may go to the park.

**Yet** shows contrast.

I drove for eight hours. I wasn't tired.  
I drove for eight hours, **yet** I wasn't tired.

**So** shows effect.

I hadn't eaten all day. I was hungry.  
I hadn't eaten all day, **so** I was hungry.

Sometimes (not always) transitional words are placed after a semicolon to explain the relationship between the independent clauses.

**Main Transitional Words:**

**However** shows **contrast** or **contradiction**.

Example: I studied for my exam. I failed it.

Combined: I studied for my exam; **however**, I failed it.

**Moreover**, **furthermore**, and **also** show **addition**.

Example: Ms. Hill stayed at school until 5:00. She worked at home for another four hours.

Combined: Ms. Hill stayed at school until 5:00; **moreover**, she worked at home for another four hours.

**Nevertheless** shows **contrast**.

Example: Danger was all around us. We weren't afraid.

Combined: Danger was all around us; **nevertheless**, we weren't afraid.

**Therefore** and **consequently** show **result**.

Example: She ran quickly. She fell and broke her leg.

Combined: She ran quickly; **consequently**, she fell and broke her leg.

Example: Mary's hard work and determination finally paid off. She won a scholarship to Florida State University.

Combined: Mary's hard work and determination finally paid off, **for** she won a scholarship to Florida State University.

OR

Mary's hard work and determination finally paid off; she won a scholarship to Florida State University.

OR

Mary won a scholarship to Florida State University; **therefore**, her hard work and determination finally paid off.

- VI. **Subordination** creates a **complex sentence** (one independent and one or more dependent clauses). Create a complex sentence by placing a subordinate (dependent) word in front of an **independent** clause, thereby making it a **dependent** clause. This **dependent clause adds information** to the independent clause, which is the most important clause in the sentence.

Some subordinate words:

|          |         |        |       |
|----------|---------|--------|-------|
| after    | because | since  | when  |
| although | before  | unless | while |
| as       | if      | until  |       |

Example: Bob went fishing at the lake. I decided to clean the attic.

Combined: **WHILE** Bob went fishing at the lake, I decided to clean the attic.

In the above combined sentence, While Bob went fishing at the lake is now a **dependent clause** because of the subordinate word **while**. I decided to clean the attic is the **independent clause** because it contains the most important information.

OR

**SINCE** I decided to clean the attic, Bob went fishing at the lake.

In this combined sentence, Since I decided to clean the attic is now the **dependent clause** because of the subordinate word **since**. Bob went fishing at the lake is the **independent clause** because it contains the most important information.

**EXERCISES:**

Try these combining techniques yourself. Combine each set of sentences on the following pages to form one sentence. Use whatever sentence-combining method seems most effective. Try two different combinations for each group.

Keep in mind that in sentence combining, the wording and the order of information can change, but the meaning has to stay basically the same.

Example: Bob was upset with Mary. Mary forgot to pick him up at work.  
Mary was watching her favorite soap opera.

Combined: Because Mary, who was watching her favorite soap opera, forgot to pick Bob up at work, he was upset with her.

OR

Bob was upset with Mary, who was watching her favorite soap opera and forgot to pick him up at work.

OR

Because she was watching her favorite soap opera, Mary forgot to pick Bob up at work; therefore, he was upset with her.

1. The boat had plenty of seats. The seats were comfortable. The seats were leather.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. My daughter is a graduate of Florida State University. My daughter is a kindergarten teacher.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Sarah left to visit her friend. Her friend lives in Ohio.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. They listened to the radio. They did their homework.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Terry will go to a four-year college. He will go to graduate school.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

6. The dog ran into the street. The owner followed him.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

7. The baby was very ill. The parents took her to the hospital.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

8. The conductor raised his baton. The eyes of the band members were on him.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

9. At the convention, I saw many old friends from college. The convention was a medical one.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

10. The teacher looked at the frightened child. The child knew he was in trouble. He had cheated on the test.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

11. New York is an exciting, fascinating town. It offers many Broadway shows and museums.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Many students failed the midterm exam in English. The English teachers are holding self-help classes after school.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Some children have a difficult time completing their school work. These children work after school. Teachers try to give extra time in school for homework.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. The ambulance quickly made a left turn onto U.S. 1. It raced to the hospital. The hospital was nearby.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. The water was in the old boat. The captain did not want to go in it.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. Many youngsters get addicted to drugs. The drugs cause death. The United States is waging a war on illegal drug use.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

17. The Titanic sank on its maiden voyage. The Titanic hit an iceberg.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

18. The typical American family inspired Norman Rockwell. Norman Rockwell was an artist. He produced many heartwarming paintings of American life.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

19. The dancers started to move on to the floor. The audience clapped in anticipation.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

20. Mrs. Terry Blanchard has had an interesting life. She has taught school. She has held public office. She has started a self-help support group.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

21. Mother and Father prepared the holiday dinner. My brothers and I sat and played games in the kitchen. The kitchen was warm and cozy.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

22. Some countries formed a coalition and declared war on Iraq. They opposed the invasion of Kuwait. Two countries are the United States and Canada.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

23. Americans are forever trying to lose weight. Diet books are making enormous profits. Fitness experts are making enormous profits. The experts give advice on the best type of exercise.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

24. The child was reciting the Gettysburg Address. The child forgot the words of the speech.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

25. The house is on the lake in North Carolina. The house is our favorite getaway.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

26. Her amnesia had resulted from an emotional breakdown. The emotional breakdown was caused by the death of her mother. It was also caused by her husband's request for a divorce.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

27. Two football teams were practicing before a game. The teams were from King's Island, Alaska. They were getting ready for the 1938 New Year's Day Ice Bowl game.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

28. The actress had checked into the spa under an assumed name. She used the name of her maid. She was recognized by people. They had seen her picture in the paper.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

29. John went out to practice. The time was 3:00. He couldn't find the rest of his teammates. Practice was at 4:00.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

30. In 1890 a postseason baseball series was played. It was a best-of-season series. It was between New York of the National League and St. Louis of the American Association.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

31. The child received a bicycle. The bicycle was new. The bicycle was shiny. The bicycle was blue.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

32. The child was lazy. She did not do her chores. She watched television all evening. Her parents scolded her.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

33. The two dogs stared at each other. One dog was a poodle. One dog was a boxer. The staring was from opposite sides of the street.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

34. The parents walked into the principal's office. Their son started to cry. Their son admitted he had cheated.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

35. The priest tried to console the victim. The victim was crying. They walked to the chapel. The chapel was in the hospital.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

36. Carol was shopping at the mall. She saw her high school sweetheart. He was fat. He was bald.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

37. Three days ago Mr. Smith's body was found. It was floating in the lake. The lake was near my house. Friends believe that Mr. Smith committed suicide.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

38. Karen Schmidt's life has been very successful. She has written many popular exercise books. She owns three fitness centers.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

39. Carol talked on the phone. She cooked her dinner.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

40. Lynn Doonan is a first grade teacher. She teaches at Lindner Place School. It is in Malverne, New York. She has written many articles on important issues. The issues are about childrearing.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

41. The woman cleaned the house. The house was dirty. The man went hunting. The hunting was for deer.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

42. Lucy had a wonderful childhood. Her memories are filled with happy thoughts. Her thoughts are about good friends. Her thoughts are about a loving family.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

43. Joanna buckled her seat belt. She started her car.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

44. Barbara and Rose walked into the abandoned building. They sensed danger. That feeling of danger caused them to leave as quickly as possible.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

45. The girl moved to a town. The town was quaint. The town was old-fashioned. The town was in New England.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

46. Brad received an A on his term paper. He called his parents. They were proud of him.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

47. Ken had a job. The job was part-time. He didn't have time to devote to his studies at college.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

48. Penny is a member of the cheerleading squad. She is a freshman at college. She is president of her class.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

49. I got caught in the rain. My hair got wet. My hair was clean. My hair was shiny.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

50. The student tried to complete the assignment. The assignment was complicated and confusing. He needed help. The teacher gave him help. The teacher was kind. The teacher was patient.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

## Writing Section

Now that you have become an expert in sentence combining, you need practice in creating sentences that contain combining techniques.

Write at least ten sentences on one of the following topics:

- Your hobbies
- Your career goals
- Your family
- Your favorite book or movie

Before beginning, review the general guidelines and do not use linking verbs. Of the ten sentences,

**Two** must contain *relative-pronoun clauses*.

**One** must contain a list of *adjectives*.

**One** must contain an *introductory participle phrase*.

**Two** must be *compound* – one with a semi-colon, one with a comma and conjunction.

**Two** must be *complex*.

Each of the remaining **two** sentences must use *two different combining techniques* (for example, *adjectives* and *relative-pronoun clauses*).