

Rules for Combining Sentences

Combining sentences is a necessary part of fluent communication in the English language; however, with all of the transitions, subjects, predicates, verbs and verbals to consider, it's easy to become overwhelmed. Sentence combining does not need to be a chore! In fact, if you follow these simple rules for combining sentences, you'll probably find that it's easy and you might even begin to enjoy it.

Combining Independent Clauses

Independent clauses are essentially two sentences that could stand on their own—in other words, they don't "depend" on another clause to allow them to make sense. These sentences must be combined with the use of a connecting word known as a "conjunction." Some popular **conjunctions** often used to achieve this purpose are and, but, for, nor, or, so, and yet. Each expresses something different, so use them wisely!

- "And" means also or in addition. Instead of saying, "Bryan went to the store. Brandon went to the store, too," try saying, "Bryan and Brandon went to the store."
- "But" expresses an opposite or different point of view. Instead of saying "It was a good idea. It was a dangerous idea," try saying, "It was a good but dangerous idea."
- "For" expresses causation or result. Instead of saying, "They went upstairs. They did this because it was bedtime," try saying, "They went upstairs, for it was bedtime."
- "Nor" means an additional negative idea. Instead of saying, "She doesn't like school. She also doesn't like being at home," try saying "She likes neither school nor home."
- "Or" reflects an additional point of view—the presence of choice. Instead of saying, "The cat is upstairs. It might also be in the garage," try saying, "The cat is upstairs or in the garage."
- "So" indicates the progression of a thought. Instead of saying, "They ditched school. This way, they would not have to take the test," try saying, "They skipped school so they could avoid the test."
- "Yet" expresses a contrast, similar to "but." Instead of saying "I loved her. On the other hand, I was angry with her," try saying, "I loved her, yet I was angry with her."

Combining Sentences with the Same Subjects and Verbs

Sentences with the same subject can be combined, since you're describing the same person, place, or thing completing different actions. This is very easy.

- Instead of: “Television is an educational tool. It is a tool that prevents education.”
- Try “Television is an educational tool that may also prevent education.”

If two sentences contain different subjects that are accomplishing the same action, the sentences can be combined as well.

- Instead of “The baby walked. The mother walked along.”
- Try “The mother walked along with the baby.”

Notice that subjects, verbs, and independent clauses all have something in common. The sentences before they are combined unnecessarily repeat words that may be omitted by combining the sentences together. By following these rules, your sentences will be more concise and interesting, and far less repetitive.

The Semicolon

The semicolon is one of the most feared punctuation marks used in the English language. How is it used, and why? In reality, the semicolon is a powerful tool when used to combine sentences.

A semicolon is useful when two sentences that are related to one another in meaning must be combined, but a comma will not suffice. Normally, a semicolon can be used in the place of a period (also known as the “full stop”). You can use a semicolon in a number of ways in the following sentences.

- Instead of “President Bush had left office. Barack Obama was now President.”
- Try “President Bush had left office; Barack Obama was now President.”
- or “President Bush had left office; now, Barack Obama was President.”
- or “President Bush had left office; as a result, Barack Obama was now President.”

Each conveys the same idea—but each also conveys that idea a bit differently.

With these simple rules for combining sentences, you can now combine sentences confidentially to make your speech and stories much more interesting.