



Combining Sentences

This handout identifies different types of clauses and different types of conjunctions and how they can be used to combine sentences. This information will help you to vary sentence structure and to avoid run-on sentences, comma splices, and sentence fragments. For more information see: Troyka, Lynn Quitman, and Douglas Hesse. *Quick Access: Compact*. 2nd ed. London: Prentice Hall, 2010. Print.

Clauses and Conjunctions

An Independent Clause is a group of words that can stand alone as a complete sentence.

Example: I went to the store today.

Dependent Clauses contain both a subject and a verb, but they begin with a word that creates dependence, such as a *subordinating conjunction* or a *relative pronoun* (e.g., *who*, *which*, *that*). Dependent clauses cannot stand alone because they do not make sense without an independent clause. They often leave the reader expecting more.

Examples: When winter comes early. [The word "when" creates dependence, leaving the reader to wonder what happens *when* winter comes early.]

Which can happen quickly. [The word "which" creates dependence. The sentence cannot stand alone and retain its meaning.]

Conjunctions connect words, phrases, or clauses.

Coordinating Conjunctions connect elements that are grammatically equal.

Examples: and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet

I went to the store, *but* I forgot to buy bread.

Subordinating Conjunctions create dependence by expressing a relationship in which the dependent clause is less grammatically important than the independent clause. In other words, the dependent clause relies on the independent clause for meaning.

Examples: after, before, once, since, until, when, whenever, while, as, because, since, in order that, so that, that, even if, if, provided that, unless, although, even though, though, whereas, than, whether, where, wherever

If I do not turn in my final paper, I am going to fail the class.

Conjunctive Adverbs create logical connections by describing or limiting meaning.

Examples: also, furthermore, moreover, besides, however, still, nevertheless, conversely, nonetheless, instead, otherwise, similarly, likewise, therefore, thus, consequently, accordingly, hence, then, next, meanwhile, finally, subsequently, indeed, certainly

Jim skipped more classes than he attended; *therefore*, he will fail the course.

Types of Sentences

Different combinations of independent and dependent clauses create different types of sentences that require different kinds of punctuation.

A Simple Sentence consists of a single independent clause.

Example: *Parks and Recreation* is my favorite show.

Compound Sentences combine two independent clauses. These clauses can be combined with a coordinating conjunction, a semicolon, or a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb. A comma always precedes the coordinating conjunction to indicate a separation.

Examples: Susan went to the store, but Nick stayed home.

Many people enjoy Chaplin films; however, others do not.

Complex Sentences combine an independent clause and a dependent clause with a subordinating conjunction. The dependent clause is usually set off with a comma

Example: When the dog barked, *the baby cried*. [The dependent clause is underlined. The independent clause is italicized.]

Compound-Complex Sentences contain two or more independent clauses *and* one or more dependent clauses.

Example: When my mother asked me if I had finished my chores, *I told her I did*, but *I was lying*. [The dependent clause is underlined. The independent clauses is italicized.]

Common Errors in Combining Sentences

Run-on Sentences or fused sentences, occur when two independent clauses meet without punctuation. Readers cannot tell where one clause ends and the next begins, causing confusion.

Example: Susan went to the store Nick stayed home and slept.

To fix a run-on sentence, you can:

- Use a period to separate the two sentences.
Susan went to the store. Nick stayed home and slept.
- Use a semicolon to separate the two clauses.
Susan went to the store; Nick stayed home and slept.
- Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction.
Susan went to the store, and Nick stayed home and slept.
- Make one of the clauses dependent with a subordinating conjunction.
When Susan went to the store, Nick stayed home and slept.
- Use a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb.
Susan went to the store; however, Nick stayed home and slept.

Comma Splices occur when a comma separates two independent clauses. A comma is not a strong enough piece of punctuation to link these clauses because it indicates a pause rather than a break. Choose one of the above options for fixing run-on sentences to remove the comma splice.

Example: Susan went to the store, Nick stayed home and slept. [This is a comma splice]

A Sentence Fragment is a dependent clause or phrase that tries to stand alone as a sentence. To revise it, rewrite the sentence to remove dependence or connect the dependent clause to an independent clause.

Incorrect: Until everything went wrong. [Dependent clause]

Correct: Everything went wrong. [Dependence removed]

The event was running smoothly, until everything went wrong.

Incorrect: The sweater that was in my closet last night. [Phrase without a verb]

Correct: The sweater that was in my closet last night is missing