

## Combining Sentences (Part I)

This handout provides a review of ways of combining sentences (with ‘coordination’), and introduces a new way (for many students) to join sentences, as well as providing a quick review of how to fix common problems with run-on or comma splice constructions.

### I. The Basics: Coordinating Conjunctions vs. Run-Ons and Comma Splices

Coordinating conjunctions (like AND) are a way to fix problems with run-on and comma splice problems.

- A REALLY BROKEN SENTENCE: RUN-ON *RO*

*RO*

Personal essays tell us about life your own story can show off an more important idea or theme.

What’s wrong with the sentence above? You probably know that the sentence above is a **run-on**, in which the ‘sentence boundary’ between two complete sentences is not marked. When you are learning to write, this kind of error is considered fairly important.

The way to fix this broken sentence is with a 1) coordinating conjunction (AND) and 2) a comma. (See below.)

- ANOTHER BROKEN SENTENCE: COMMA SPLICE *CS*

*CS*

Personal essays tell us about life, your own story can show off an more important idea or theme.

If you use only the comma—but not the coordinating conjunction, you have a **comma splice**, which is another fairly serious error in formal writing. (Notice, however, that in casual writing—and in creative fiction, authors use commas splices all the time.)

- BETTER (BUT STILL BROKEN): THE FORGOTTEN COMMA *RO,*

*RO,*

Personal essays tell us about life and your own story can show off an more important idea or theme.

**Note:** Prof. Dragan uses a special form of RO (run-on) to mark missing commas for compound sentences: *RO,*

Often, we forget this comma because we almost never use it in informal writing (like on e-mails or text messages). Remember that for the 'formal' writing for this class, you want to include them. (For grading purposes, "RO," is cosmetic and is a minor stylistic error while "RO" is more serious because it shows a writer doesn't know where a sentence begins and ends.)

● **CORRECT: USE BOTH THE CONJUNCTION AND THE COMMA**

Personal essays tell us about life, and your own story can show off an more important idea or theme.

Use the coordinating conjunction (AND) plus the comma. This is the correct way to join two complete sentences.

\*\*\*The exception is that for two really short sentences, you may usually skip the comma, but for most of the time in formal English, you need to remember to use commas between two complete 'independent clauses.'

BEFORE

Birds fly. Fish swim.

AFTER (COMBINED)

Birds fly, and fish swim. [This comma is always acceptable for formal writing.]

(OR JUST)

Birds fly and fish swim. [The exception for really short sentences combined.]

## II. Coordinating Conjunctions -- BEYOND 'AND'

**DID YOU KNOW THAT AND IS NOT THE ONLY 'COORDINATING CONJUNCTION'?!**

Other coordinating conjunctions to know about:

and -- in addition, also  
 but -- however, unless  
 or -- as another possibility  
 yet -- however, unless  
 so -- as a result (cause and effect)  
 for -- because (cause and effect)

As above, when you use a **coordinating conjunction** to combine short, closely related sentences, put a comma before the conjunction. **Be sure to select a conjunction that logically**

**connects the sentences.** It really is possible to expand your 'sentence style' using different conjunctions from the above list. HINT: MOVE BEYOND 'AND' TO ADD MORE LOGIC TO YOUR COMBINED SENTENCES.

BEFORE

I will take the train. I will ride the bus.

AFTER

I will take the train, **or** I will ride the bus.

BEFORE

The train was late. I arrived just in time for my first class.

AFTER

The train was late, **but** I arrived just in time for my first class.

(Notice that this combined sentence expresses a contradiction: you should have been late, but you weren't.)

BEFORE

The bus was on time. I arrived just in time for my first class.

AFTER

The bus was on time, **so** I arrived just in time for my class.

(Notice that this combined sentence expresses a logical conclusion, in fact, a cause and effect relationship: you were on time because your bus was on time. The second sentence follows from the first one. Here, "so" is synonymous with "therefore." However, "therefore" requires a bit more work to use correctly. See below.)

### III. "Connecting with Adverbs": A New Way To Combine Sentences

To express different kinds of ideas, you need to know how to write different kinds of sentences. As you become more accomplished as a writer, you will want to expand your 'repertoire' of ways to connect sentences.

Another way to join equally important sentences is with special 'adverbs' which connect two separate sentences. With this sentence style, you can create some logically powerful and sophisticated sentences, **a technique which can be especially useful for formal writing (and research papers).**

## Special 'Connecting Adverbs'

Add an idea: **also, furthermore, in addition, moreover**

Show a different point (contrast): **however, instead, nevertheless, otherwise**

Show a similar point (comparison): **likewise, similarly**

Stress a key idea: **indeed, in fact, undoubtedly, certainly**

Show a consequence or result: **as a result, consequently, therefore, thus**

Point out a sequence: **first, second, next, finally**

**\*\*YOU CANNOT USE A COMMA TO JOIN SENTENCES WITH CONNECTING ADVERBS.**

**\*\*INSTEAD, THESE WORDS LOGICALLY CONNECT TWO SEPARATE SENTENCES.**

The neighborhood grocery store is small. It is very expensive.

The neighborhood grocery store is small. **Moreover**, it is very expensive.

1) To use this construction, select a connecting adverb that shows the logical connection between the sentences.

Here are some other examples

BEFORE

The bus was on time. I arrived just in time for my first class.

AFTER

The bus was on time. **Therefore**, I arrived just in time for my class.

BEFORE

The bus was an hour late. I took the train.

AFTER

The bus was an hour late. **Instead**, I took the train.

BEFORE

This paper has a lot of strong word choices. It has a coherent argument.

AFTER

This paper has a lot of strong word choices. **Furthermore**, it has a coherent argument.

BEFORE

Personal essays tell us about life. It can be dangerous to base your ideas and beliefs only on personal experience.

AFTER

Personal essays tell us about life. **However**, it can be dangerous to base your ideas and beliefs only on personal experience.

\*\*\*The two sentences above are logically connected to express a contrast or distinction between personal essay and personal experience.

#### BEFORE

A personal essay tells us about life. Autobiography tells one person's story that often can show off larger ideas.

#### AFTER

A personal essay tells us about life. **Likewise**, autobiography tells one person's story that often can show off larger ideas.

\*\*\*This example above expresses a similarity or something in common between personal essays and autobiography.

#### BEFORE

Personal essays use themes to express the larger ideas behind them. Most authors seem to keep a sense of a larger idea in mind when they write.

#### AFTER

Personal essays use themes to express the larger ideas behind them. **Indeed**, most authors seem to keep a sense of a larger idea in mind when they write.

Notice these combined sentences emphasize a key idea: that authors write with a sense of a larger theme or idea when they write. Together, this sentence makes quite a strong point about 'big ideas' in personal essays.

## V. Trying It Out – Practice Using Coordinating Conjunctions and ‘Connecting Adverbs’

IN-CLASS PRACTICE — Combine (or logically connect) the following sentences with some of the above techniques:

- 1) Gangster movies often contain scenes of extreme violence. They are the subject of some debate.
- 2) At the same time, gangster movies have been popular with audiences. Some of the most successful movies of all time have been crime movies.
- 3) In 1983, Al Pacino portrayed Tony Montana in Brian DePalma’s *Scarface*. This version of *Scarface* is not original. There was version of *Scarface* made by Howard Hawk in the 1930s.
- 4) The original *Scarface* tells the story of a gangster in Chicago. The main character in this original film was modeled on the life of Al Capone.
- 5) In the re-make, Tony Montana wants to be a success. He finds there are not many jobs available to him. He turns to a life of crime.
- 6) Tony Montana is good at his business. He beats out most of his competitors.
- 7) In *Scarface*, Tony is sometimes shown to be angry. He is also a successful businessperson and kind to his younger sister.
- 8) *Scarface* made people more aware of Al Pacino’s talents as an actor. He became more popular with audiences around the world.
- 9) Akio disliked the political ads during the last election. He decided to register as an Independent.
- 10) Einstein had a reputation as an absentminded scientist. He could be very forgetful.
- 11) Owners of small specialty stores find it hard to compete with large chain stores. They need to advertise their products on television and the Internet.
- 12) Landscape artists are more than just gardeners. They are both scientists and artists.
- 13) The newspaper arrived late. I wasn’t able to read about the big earthquake in Alaska.
- 14) I could not find the book in the library. I asked one of the librarians for help.