

Combining Sentences

Often successful writing will attempt to balance shorter, simple sentences with compound and complex sentences. Consider the following sentence from "Triple Tragedy in Black Society":

Notwithstanding sports' reputation in Black society for beneficence and for providing extraordinary, if not exemplary, social and economic mobility opportunities, the reality is that in sports, no less than in society, Black advancement has been achieved at the price of persistent, vigilant, intelligent reflection and determined individual and collective struggle.

The fundamental ideas in this sentence could be written as follows (i.e., as a series of shorter, *simple* sentences):

Sports has a reputation in Black society for beneficence.
It also has a reputation for extraordinary social and economic mobility opportunities.
These extraordinary opportunities may not exemplify the opportunities available to most.
The reality is that in sports, Black advancement has been achieved at the price of persistent, vigilant, intelligent reflection.
It has also been achieved at the price of determined individual and collective struggle.
In society, the situation is no different.

Combining shorter sentences into longer compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences can sometimes improve your writing by **showing relationships between ideas** and making your prose generally **more efficient**.

Your interest as a student writer is to first learn how to combine sentences in such a way that relationships between ideas are clearly and economically shown, and second to learn how to balance complex structures with shorter, simple sentences. The following exercise will help you.

Exercise: Combining Sentences

I.

Directions: Combine or restructure the following sentences by subordinating minor ideas or by coordinating ideas of equal importance. You must decide which ideas are minor because the sentences are given out of context.

Example:

The team rowed until their strength nearly gave out and finally returned to shore, ^{where they} ~~and~~ had a party on the beach ^{to celebrate} ~~and celebrated~~ the start of the season.

1. A couple of minutes went by. The teacher walked in smiling.
2. The losing team was made up of superstars. These superstars acted as isolated individuals on the court.
3. We keep our use of insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides to a minimum. We are concerned about the environment.
4. The aides help the younger children with reading and math. These are the children's weakest subjects.
5. My first sky dive was from an altitude of 12,500 feet. It was the most frightening experience of my life.

II.

Directions: In the following paragraph, combine choppy sentences by subordinating minor ideas or by coordinating ideas of equal importance. More than one effective revision is possible.

Some scientists favor continued research to advance the technology of genetic engineering. They argue that they are only refining the process of selective breeding that has benefited society for many years. For centuries, they claim, scientists have recognized variations in plant and animal species from generation to generation. In the early nineteenth century, scientists explained those variations as part of an evolutionary process. They called this process natural selection. Later scientists found ways to duplicate this process of natural selection. They did not want to leave the process to chance. They developed the technique of selective breeding.