

## Creating Complex Sentences

Essays can be improved by varying the length and complexity of the sentences you choose. An essay composed mostly of short, simple sentences can sound choppy and disconnected. This handout describes several ways to combine simple sentences into more complex ones that clearly express the relationship between the ideas being combined.

1. To emphasize a time relationship between ideas expressed in two simple sentences, combine the sentences with the linking words 'when', 'while', 'before', or 'after'. For example:

Sentence 1: Losha immigrated to Montreal in 1959

Sentence 2: Quebec's quiet revolution took place between 1960 and 1966.

These two sentences can be combined by using the word 'before':

Losha immigrated to Montreal in 1959 before Quebec's Quiet Revolution took place between 1960 and 1966.

2. To emphasize a causal relationship between ideas expressed in two simple sentences, combine the sentences with the linking words 'because', 'since', or 'for'. For example:

Sentence 1: Stalin refused to believe that Germany would attack the Soviet Union

Sentence 2: Stalin's madness led him to believe the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact meant what it said.

These two sentences can be combined with the word 'because':

Stalin refused to believe that Germany would attack the Soviet Union because his madness led him to believe the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact meant what it said.

3. To emphasize other possible relationships between ideas expressed in two simple sentences, combine the sentences with a comma and one of the linking words 'and', 'but', 'or', 'so', 'yet'. For example:

Sentence 1: Most community members participate in the annual event.

Sentence 2: Their behavior is highly regulated.

These two sentences can be joined with a comma and the linking word that best expresses the relationship between them.

Most community members participate in the annual event, and their behavior is highly regulated.

OR:

Most community members participate in the annual event, but their behavior is highly regulated.

OR:

Most community members participate in the annual event, so their behavior is highly regulated.

4. Combine simple sentences that share a common element by replacing that element with 'which', 'that', 'who', or 'whose' in an embedded phrase. For example:

Sentence 1: The clothes designed by Santana were always in style.

Sentence 2: Santana was the envy of every designer in the world.

These two sentences can be connected by replacing the designer's name with 'who' or 'whose' and embedding the result within the other sentence.

The clothes designed by Santana, who was the envy of every designer in the world, were always in style.

OR:

Santana, whose clothes were always in style, was the envy of every designer in the world.

Notice that the resulting sentences give more emphasis to the idea in the main portion of each sentence than they do the idea of the embedded portion.

The following is a other example of how this strategy can be applied to show the relationship between two simple sentences:

Sentence 3: The philosophers have debated Aristotle's idea for centuries.

Sentence 4: Aristotle's idea was contention in his own time.

These two sentences can be connected by replacing the common item, 'Aristotle's idea,' with 'which' in one sentence and embedding the result within the other sentence.

The philosophers have debated Aristotle's idea, which was contentious in his own time, for centuries.

Aristotle's idea, which philosophers have debated for centuries, was contentious in his own time.

Again the emphasis in the combined sentence depends on which idea is embedded in the other.