

# Writing Center

## COMBINING CLAUSES OR SENTENCES

Writers frequently combine sentences to show that ideas are closely related in meaning. Simple sentences, when combined with other sentences, are identified as *independent clauses* or *main ideas*.

### Coordination with a Coordinating Conjunction

To show that ideas have approximately equal emphasis, join them with a comma or a coordinating conjunction (but, or, yet, for, and, nor, so). Your new sentence will contain two independent clauses (or main clauses) connected by a coordinating conjunction. The coordinating conjunction is not considered to be part of either clause; it is a connector between them.

The clouds were dark. We expected rain.  
The clouds were dark, **so** we expected rain.

We can swim in the ocean. We can play on the beach.  
We can swim in the ocean, **or** we can play catch on the beach.

I brought the drinks. Joe forgot the potato chips.  
I brought the drinks, **but** Joe forgot the potato chips.

### Coordination with a Semicolon (and Optional Conjunctive Adverb or Transition)

To show that ideas have approximately equal emphasis, join them with a semicolon. To further clarify the relationship between the ideas, add a conjunctive adverb. Note that the conjunctive adverb is considered to be part of whichever clause you have placed it in; in fact, the conjunctive adverb may be placed within the clause or at the end of the clause in some circumstances. The semicolon serves as the connector between the clauses. Note, too, that the primary use of the semicolon is to connect independent clauses.

The clouds were dark. We expected rain.  
The clouds were dark; we expected rain.  
The clouds were dark; therefore, we expected rain.

The ocean was rough. We went swimming.  
The ocean was rough; we went swimming.  
The ocean was rough; nevertheless, we went swimming.

Joe brought the potato chips. They were stale.  
Joe brought the potato chips; they were stale.  
Joe brought the potato chips; however, they were stale.  
Joe brought the potato chips; they were stale, however.

### **Subordination**

To show that the ideas have unequal emphasis (usually one clause contains background or secondary or descriptive details), use a subordinator to distinguish the less emphatic idea from the main idea. The subordinator creates a dependent clause and serves as the connector relating the dependent clause to the independent clause. Remember that a dependent clause cannot stand alone as a sentence.

The clouds were dark. We expected rain.  
***Because the clouds were dark***, we expected rain.  
We expected rain ***because*** the clouds were dark.

We went swimming. The ocean was rough.  
We went swimming ***although*** the ocean was rough.  
***When we went swimming***, the ocean was rough.

Joe brought the potato chips. He forgot to ring the drinks.  
Although ***Joe brought the potato chips***, he forgot to bring the drinks.  
Joe, ***who forgot to bring the drinks***, brought the potato chips.  
Joe, ***who brought the potato chips***, forgot to bring the drinks.