

# Sentence Combining

Smooth long sentences are really combinations of short sentences. For example, if you wanted to convey the information in the series of sentences listed below, how would you write it?

1. The Torres family had a farm. 2. The farm was about 15 miles below Monterey. 3. It was on the coast. 4. The coast was wild. 5. The farm was a few acres in size. 6. The acres were sloping. 7. The acres were above a cliff. 8. The cliff dropped to the reefs. 9. The reefs were brown. 10. The cliffs dropped to the waters. 11. The waters were white. 12. The waters were the ocean. 13. The waters were hissing.

The original sentence from John Steinbeck's short story "Flight" is,

"About fifteen miles below Monterey, on a wild coast, the Torres family had their farm, a few sloping acres above a cliff that dropped to the brown reefs and to the hissing white waters of the ocean."

The strategies proposed below will help developing writers to build longer and more complicated sentences, which, by their nature, make better arguments. Good writers use many different combining techniques in order to make their work interesting to read.

**Strategy one uses a comma and a coordinating conjunction: and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so.**

- *I want to help my roommate, but I've run out of suggestions.*
- *I like neither his sense of humor nor his personality.*
- *I'll come back later, and bring an RA.*

**Strategy two uses a subordinating conjunction. There are three groups:**

- 1) the pronouns: that, which, what, who, and whose
- 2) the prepositions: after, although, as, because, before, how, if, once, since, that, though, till, unless, until, what, when, whenever, where, wherever, why, and while
- 3) phrases: as if, as soon as, as though, even though, in order that, in that, no matter how

- *If I don't get some sleep soon, I'll just go crazy.*
- *I could crash at my parents' house, unless they've changed the locks already.*
- *Since I moved out, things just haven't been the same.*

**Strategy three uses an -ing word group (an absolute).**

- *Practicing every day, I am building up a fine repertoire of lame excuses.*
- *I have avoided studying, hoping to get by on my exotic looks and brilliant sense of humor.*

**Strategy four uses an -ed word group (participle phrase).**

- *Helen, elated by her essay grade, showed it to all her friends.*
- *She put the paper back in its folder, surprised by the stupidity of their remarks.*
- *Confused, she went to her room.*

**Strategy five uses a word group that follows a noun+comma and renames it (appositive).**

- *Max Power, one of Homer J. Simpson's alter-egos, flew to Tahiti on a corporate jet.*
- *Little did he know that the pilot, a former stunt flyer, was planning a detour in Tijuana.*

**Strategy six uses an -ly word (adverb).**

- *Jack Lantern crept swiftly and stealthily towards the unwitting trick-or-treaters.*
- *He lept from the bushes and shouted menacingly at them, waving his arms wildly.*
- *Efficiently, they unloaded their pepper-spray canisters into his writhing face.*

**Strategy six uses a to + verb word group (infinitive).**

- *To succeed in this course, you must rewrite many papers.*
- *Use all of your best ideas to revise them.*
- *To write better, worry more about argument than questioning.*

**Strategy seven uses prepositional phrases.**

- *According to my advisor, I have no idea what I'm doing.*
- *After I graduated from college, something just snapped.*
- *In my subconscious mind, I wish I was back in kindergarten.*

**Strategy eight uses words (especially verbs and adjectives) in a series.**

- *The tired, hungry manager forced his stubborn, petulant, bored workers to listen.*
- *The student's cell phone vibrated, flashed, and emitted a mind-numbing tune.*