Coordination and Subordination

Coordination and subordination are two basic ways of combining two sentences to help the reader see how they are related.

**Coordination** connects ideas that are roughly **equal** in importance. The most common way to coordinate ideas in a sentence is to use the *coordinating conjunctions*. There are seven of these: **and**, **but**, **or**, **nor**, **for**, **so**, and **yet**. Choose the one that best expresses the connection of ideas that you want to convey.

Sentences can also be **coordinated** by using the semi-colon. The **semi-colon** is used to join two clauses that are closely related, representing two parts of one complicated thought.

**Subordination** connects clauses of **unequal** importance.

An idea can be **subordinated** by using one of the *subordinating conjunctions*. There are many of these; some of the most common are listed below. (More are listed on page 144 (7th ed.) or 154 (8th ed.) of *Rules for Writers*. Note: **who**, **whose**, and **which** are a special type of subordinator that we will look at separately.) The various subordinating conjunctions indicate different types of relationships between the subordinate clause and the main clause, such as cause-effect, chronology, conditions, etc. Choose the one that best conveys your meaning.

- **after**
- **although**
- **as**
- **as long as**
- **as soon as**
- **as though**
- **because**
- **before**
- **by the time**
- **even if**
- **even though**
- **every time**
- **if**
- **in case**
- **now that**
- **provided that**
- **once**
- **since**
- **though**
- **unless**
- **until**
- **when**
- **whenever**
- **whereas**
- **whether**
- **while**

The **colon** is another type of subordinator. It introduces something that *illustrates*, *clarifies*, or *amplifies* something in the main clause.

**Note:** Words like **however**, **then**, and **therefore** can suggest relationships between ideas that are similar to what some of the conjunctions communicate, but they are grammatically different and therefore need different punctuation. See the “diagram for help with punctuation” handout for help with deciding how to punctuate such sentences.
Sentence Combining Exercise

Think of possible relationships between the ideas in each pair of sentences below, and rewrite each pair as one sentence, using coordinating and subordinating conjunctions as directed. Reverse the order of the ideas if you like, and substitute pronouns (such as she) when appropriate.

For the first two, create one sentence using a coordinating conjunction, and one using a subordinating conjunction.

1. Remember to wear your safety goggles. The sparks could blind you.

2. They are very happy together. No one else thought they would make a good couple.

For number 3, create one sentence using a coordinating conjunction, and two using two different subordinating conjunctions.

3. They moved away two years ago. I miss them.

For the next three, create two sentences using two different subordinating conjunctions.

4. My mom was twenty-two. My mom married her first husband.

5. The war was over. The soldiers returned home.

6. You love me. You’ll do this for me.

For these sentences, find at least one way to combine the sentences logically into one sentence, using a combination of coordinating and/or subordinating conjunctions.

7. The airline announced that the plane was late. Frank waited patiently in the lounge. He was anxious to see his family.