

Subordination: Clauses & Phrases

Adjective Clauses

When two sentences have a noun or a pronoun in common, you can make one sentence an adjective clause and combine it with the other sentence. Place the more important idea in the independent clause and the subordinate idea in the adjective clause. Connect the clauses with a relative pronoun (that, which, who, whom, whose). In the following revised sentences, the adjectives are in italics.

Two Sentences:

My cousin recently read a fascinating book. She cannot stop talking about it.

Revised sentence with Adjective Clause:

My cousin recently read a fascinating book that she cannot stop talking about.

Two sentences:

She was enchanted by the book. It tells a bizarre and interesting story.

Revised Sentence with Adjective Clause:

She was enchanted by the book, which tells a bizarre and interesting story.

Adverb Clauses

When you can relate two sentences by time, manner, cause, condition, comparison, purpose, or result, you can make one sentence an adverb clause and combine it with the other sentence. You can form an adverb clause by adding a subordination conjunction to an independent clause. The following list shows the relationship expressed by subordinating conjunctions between the adverb clause and the independent clause in a sentence.

Time: after, as long as, as soon as, before, since, until, when, whenever, while

Manner: as, as if, as though

Cause: because

Condition: although, as long as, even if, even though, if, provided that, though, unless, while,

Comparison: as, than

Purpose or result: in order that, so that, that

In the following revised sentences, the adverb clauses are in italics.

Two Sentences:

Ms. Sullivan had to catch a plane to Toronto. She left work early.

Revised with Adverb Clause:

Because Ms. Sullivan had to catch the plane to Toronto, she left work early. [cause]

Three Sentences:

The rest of the family settled into its usual relaxing Sunday afternoon. Walter checked the ads. He could begin job hunting in the morning.

Revised Sentence with Adverb Clause:

As the rest of the family settled into its usual relaxing Sunday afternoon, Walter checked the want ads so that he could begin job hunting in the morning.
[time and purpose]

Choose subordinating conjunctions carefully. Different conjunctions can change the meaning of your sentence. Notice how the meaning of the following sentence changes as the subordinating conjunction is changed.

Before Rona joined the game, the score changed.

Because Rona joined the game, the score changed.

Whenever Rona joined the game, the score changed.

Noun Clauses

You can use noun clauses to subordinate ideas in sentences. To combine sentence by means of noun clause, you may substitute all of part of one sentence for a pronoun or a noun in the other sentence. In the following revised sentences, the noun clauses are in italics.

Two Sentences:

Phil is concerned. It is clear why. [*It* in the second sentence refers to the entire first sentence]

Revised Sentence with Noun Clause:

Why Phil is concerned is clear. [Noun clause replaces *It* as subject]

Two Sentences:

The problem is this. His telephone rings late at night. [*This* in the first sentence refers to the entire second sentence.]

Revised Sentence with Noun Clause:

The problem is *that his telephone rings late at night*. [Noun clauses replace *this* as predicate nominative.]

A complex sentence can have more than one kind of subordinate clause. In the following sentence, underline any main (independent) clauses, place angle brackets around any subordinate clauses (dependent), and label each subordinate clause by its grammatical function in the sentence (ADJ, ADV, N):

The developers who have been hired by the city plan to raze the Crown Building because it is dilapidated.

Exercise 3 Revising: Subordination

Combine each of the following sets of sentences into one complex sentence. Make one of the sentences the type of subordinate clause indicated in parentheses. Place angle brackets around any subordinate clauses.

Sample:

Technology developed for space program often can be used to learn more about our life on Earth. Scientists have discovered that fact. (Noun Clause)

Answer:

Scientists have discovered <that technology developed for the space program> often can be used to learn more about our life on Earth.

1. Satellites are being used to take pictures of the surface of the earth. The satellites orbit the earth at an altitude of more than five hundred miles. (Adjective clause)
2. The satellite photographs cannot show small items such as buildings or streets. They do show geographical features such as mountains or forests. (Adverb clause)
3. The satellites transform visible light and invisible heat from the earth's surface into electronic signals. The electronic signals are sent to earth. (Adjective clause)
4. Computers received the data from the satellites. They transform the electronic signals into pictures. (Adverb clause)
5. All the United States and 78 percent of the rest of world have been photographed clearly by satellites from the United States. This is proof of the success of this method. (Noun Clause)
6. The process of turning signals into pictures changes the color of things. Forests, for example, show up red in the pictures. (Adverb clause)
7. The strange coloring does not matter to geologists, environmentalist, and agricultural planners. They review the photographs. (Adjective clause)

8. Geologists examine the photographs for signs of oil deposits or earthquake fault lines. These signs stand out more clearly without such distractions as buildings in the photographs. (Adjective clause)

9. Environmentalists can see clouds of air pollution joining with rain clouds. The environmentalists are trying to determinate the effects of air pollution on weather. (Adjective Clause)

10. Agricultural planners can judge the number of crops in wide area. Then they can estimate the current year's food supplies and the amount of planting that will be needed for the next year. (Adverb clause)


Exercise 4 Revising: Subordination

On your paper, combine each set of sentences into one complex sentence by making one or more of the sentences into subordinate clauses. This time underline any main clauses, place angle brackets around any subordinate clauses, and label each subordinate clause by its grammatical function in the sentence (ADJ, ADV, N):

Sample:

Many words are derived from people's names. We use the words every day.

Answer:

Many words  **ADJ** (the clause answers the question, "which words?")
 Many words <that we use every day> are derived from people's names.

1. The Earl of Sandwich invented the food named for him. He asked his servant for a piece of meat between two pieces of bread.

2. The begonia was named after Michel Begon. Begon found the plant on the island of Santo Domingo.

3. Gabriel Fahrenheit invented the scale for measuring temperature. Scientist honored him by giving the scale his name.

4. A London cloth merchant named Dolly designed the materials to make doilies. He wanted an inexpensive but elegant fabric.

5. John Bowler was a London hatmaker. He gave his name to a derby hat. The British call it a bowler.

6. Adolphe Sax invented the saxophone. He was trying to improve the clarinet.

7. Charles Macintosh cemented together two pieces of cloth. He created a water proof fabric for raincoats. The raincoats are now called mack-intoshes.

8. The roads in the nineteenth century Britain needed to be repaired. John McAdam mended them with a mixture of stones and gravel. That mixture is now called macadam.

9. The leotard was named for Jules Leotard. He popularized the snugly fitting elastic garment.

10. Spoonerisms were named after William A. Spooner. It is not surprising. He often mixed up the sounds within a sentence.

Using Subordination: Phrases

Participial Phrases

You can use participial phrases to combine related sentences. The sentence expressing the less important idea becomes a participle phrase. The original sentences need not contain a verb in the same form as the corresponding participle phrase. In the following revised sentences, the participial phrases are in italics.

Two Sentences:

Ira sent an urgent message. It asked for more data.

Revised Sentences with Participial Phrase:

Ira sent an urgent message *asking for more data*. [Subject *It* is deleted; remainder of statement becomes participial phrase.]

Three Sentences:

Jan was asked to reply all at once. She sent the information. The information was requested by Ira.

Revised Sentence with Participial Phrases:

Asked to reply at once, Jan sent the information *requested by Ira*.
[*Jan* was deleted from the first sentence; remainder of sentence becomes participial phrase. Second *information* is deleted; remainder of sentence becomes participial phrase.]

Two Sentences:

Jane met her obligation. She proceeded with her work.

Revised Sentence with Participial Phrases:

Jan, *having met her obligation*, proceeded with her work.

Appositives and Appositive Phrases

When two sentences have nouns or pronouns that refer to the same thing, you can sometimes rewrite one of the sentences as an appositive or an appositive phrase and combine it with the other sentence. In the following revised sentences, the appositive phrases are in italics.

Two Sentences:

The snarled morning traffic into the city is a daily ritual. It has come to seem normal.
[*Traffic* and *it* refer to the same thing, as does the predicate nominative, *ritual*.]

Revised Sentence with Appositive:

The snarled morning traffic, *a daily ritual*, has come to seem normal.

Three Sentences:

Casey Stengel led the New York Yankees to seven world championships between 1949 and 1958. Those were years when the Yankees were invincible. Casey Stengel was one of the greatest managers.

Revised with Appositive Phrases:

Casey Stengel, *one of baseball's greatest managers*, led the New York Yankees to seven world championships between 1949 and 1958, *years when the Yankees seemed invincible*.

Exercise 5 Revising: Subordination

Combine each group of sentences with one or more participial or appositive phrases. Use the type of phrase indicated in parentheses.

Sample:

The group of tourists had climbed to the overlook. They hoped to see buffalo. The animals waded in the river below. (Participial phrases)

Answer:

The group of tourists had climbed to the overlook, *hoping to see buffalo wading in the river below*.

1. Ms. Segreda recommended that the company hire another data control technician. Ms. Segreda is the department head. [Appositive phrase]
2. The fantastic pinnacles, mounds, buttes, gullies, and other formations astound a visitor to the South Dakota Bad Lands. The formations were carved by the forces of Nature. (Participial phrase)
3. Mount Kilimanjaro is capped by snow. It rises almost four miles above the African countryside around it. (Participial phrase)
4. Joyce Carol Oates is a prolific writer of novels, short stories, criticism, and poetry. She is known for her tales of ordinary people in unpleasant situations. (Appositive phrase)

5. In falconry, the falconer uses a heavy leather glove for protection from the bird's claws. Falconry is a method of hunting small game with trained falcons. (Appositive phrase)
6. Wind farmers throughout the country are using modern windmills to produce energy. The farmers sell the energy to public utility companies. (Participial phrase)
7. The soil here supports very little plant life. The soil is composed mainly of sand and gravel. These are layered with clay, limestone, and sandstone. (Participial phrases)
8. The Marine Society trip is a one-week voyage around the coral reefs of Bermuda. It will offer not only the chance to explore the ecology of the reefs, but also an opportunity to study two fascinating kinds of animal life. One is the humpback whale, and the other is an oceanic bird. (Appositive phrases)
9. My brother wanted to visit San Miguel de Allende, but my sister preferred to explore Teotihuacan. San Miguel is a charming, old Mexican town, and Teotihuacan is the site of –oltec pyramids. (Appositive phrases)
10. London is sinking at the rate of one foot per century. It is in danger of being flooded by the Thames River. The Thames River runs through the middle of the day. (Participial phrases)

Exercise 6 Revising: Subordination

On your paper, combine each pair of sentences into one sentence. Change one sentence in each pair into a subordinate clause or a phrase. Label each.

Sample:

Gymnastic exercises are divided into ten categories. Six categories are for men, and four categories are for women.

Answer:

Gymnastic exercises are divided into ten categories, *six categories for men and four for women*. [appositive phrase]

1. Men participate in floor exercises. They perform tumbling runs and dance and strength moves across a forty-foot square mat.
2. Men also do exercises on a pommel horse. A pommel horse is a padded bar with handles.
3. Men hang from two wooden rings. They do handstands and several types of swings.
4. In another event, men vault over a horse without pommels. The event is the long-horse vault.
5. Men do acrobatic movements on the parallel bars. The parallel bars are two bars that are sixty-five inches from the floor.
6. Men also perform nonstop movements on a horizontal high bar. They must change hand positions and include at least one release move.
7. Women balance on a beam four inches wide. They spin, leap, dance, and even perform difficult tumbling runs.
8. Women vault over a horse without pommels. This is the second gymnastic event for women.
9. Women do exercises around one bar at a time on the uneven parallel bars. They keep their bodies in constant motion.
10. Women dance, leap, and perform to music. Women compete in floor exercises.

Assignment: Revising

On your own paper, revise the following paragraph. Use coordination and subordination to combine related sentences so that the paragraph is clear and the sentences are smooth.

Throughout the United States, people are experimenting with job sharing. Job sharing is having two people share one full-time job. Job sharing is beneficial for several reasons. Employers benefit. They get two points of view on all issues. Also, job sharers are working shorter hours. They can be fresher and, consequently, more can share the responsibilities of their jobs with their coworkers. They can still have free time to spend with their families, on studies, or in other activities. Also, they are able to work part time in fields such as teaching and personnel. Those fields usually do not offer part-time work. Finally, the average pay of job sharers is higher than the average pay of regular part-time workers. Because of these benefits, it is clear. Job sharing will become more popular in the future.

Assignment Checklist

Check your assignment for the following points:

1. Did you place some related ideas in compound sentences?
2. Did you use appropriate methods of coordination?
3. Did you place subordinate clauses and phrases?

Revising Sentences: Variety

Sentences that are varied in form and length work well together. When you revise sentences in a paragraph, check them for variety. Variety in sentences helps to keep your reader interested.

Variety in Sentence Beginnings

Add variety to your sentences by beginning some of them with a part of the sentence other than the subject. For example, you can often place modifiers at the beginning of a sentence. Here are the most common possibilities.

Adjective(s)

Interesting yet simple, the melodies of Sir Arthur Sullivan continue to delight audiences.

Adverb

Sometimes even committed fans of Gilbert and Sullivan forget who wrote the lyrics and who wrote the music.

Appositive Phrase

Satires on Victorian Behavior, the operettas are lighthearted and witty.

Participial Phrase (Past)

Built to stage Gilbert and Sullivan's works, the Savoy Theatre in London has given its name to both the performers and the fans of these operettas.

Participial Phrase (Present)

With their frenzied lyrics, the songs demon superb breath control.

Prepositional Phrase

Working together from 1871 and 1896, Gilbert and Sullivan wrote more than a dozen operettas.

Infinitive Phrase

To portray a Gilbert and Sullivan character effectively, a performer needs a good sense of humor as much as a good voice.

Adverb Clause

Although the humor was addressed to the “proper” Victorians, the satire is timeless and the characters universal.

You cannot shift every modifier to the beginning of sentence. For example, the modifier in the following sentence cannot be shifted to the beginning because the meaning would be changed.

Correct:

Benny heard the wind tearing through the attic.

Incorrect:

Tearing through the attic, Benny heard the wind.

Exercise 1 Revising: Variety

Rewrite the sentences in which some part can be shifted to the beginning. If no part can be shifted, write *No change*.

Sample:

The textile plant, a victim of advancing technology and declining markets, had silenced its machines decades ago.

Answer:

A victim of advancing technology and declining markets, the textile plant had silenced its machines decades ago.

1. The railroad tracks and cinderblock buildings of the old plant lay untouched for years, although occasionally someone would complain about the eyesore.
2. The tangle of rusting metal and crumbling bricks decayed silently but steadily, aided by salt air and neglect.

3. The city and the state had ignored the unsightly ruins because they seemed not worth saving.
4. Someone with vision and energy viewed the rotting buildings at last.
5. He imagined a busy, beautiful urban complex rising from the ruins.
6. He approached local and federal agencies, armed with detailed plans, cost estimates, and the support of area residents and workers.
7. The renewal project, having received loans from the appropriate agencies, began.
8. The developer who had the vision directed the renewal project.
9. A new kind of dust spread over the plant, not the dusty decay but the dust of construction.
10. Restored buildings, new shops, and modern apartments soon emerged from the dust.

Variety in Structure and Length

Variety is also important in the structure and length of your sentences. You can say essentially the same thing in many different ways; choose a way that fits well with the surrounding sentences. In a paragraph you can mix simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences. The following sentences state basically the same idea in a variety of ways.

- The Black Hills, which are located in the west-central part of South Dakota, are a popular tourist area. [complex sentence with adjective clause]
- Located in the west-central part of South Dakota, the Black hills are a popular tourist area. [simple sentence with participial phrase]
- The Black Hills, a popular tourist area, are located in the west-central part of South Dakota. [simple sentence with appositive phrase]

As you practice writing and revising, you will become increasingly able to sense how an added phrase here or a combined clause there affects the emphasis or the style of your sentences. Before you settle on a final version, rewrite a sentence in different ways to see its effect on the sentences around it.

Exercise 2 Revising Variety

On your paper, revise each sentence to vary its structure.

Sample:

Mushrooms, which are unusual plants, have been objects of curiosity and fear for hundreds of years.

Answer:

Because they are unusual plants, mushrooms have been objects of curiosity and fear for hundreds of years.

1. Because mushrooms are the most common nonflowering plants, they can easily be observed.
2. Mushrooms grow in variety of sizes, which range from microscopic to three-foot-wide growth on trees.
3. Most of the mushroom plant grows underground, and we only see the fruit part of the plant.
4. Differing greatly from the top part to the plant, the underground part is composed of long, branching strands.
5. Sometimes the underground parts of two plants merge, and a new mushroom forms at their intersection.
6. Because mushrooms can appear overnight, some sixteenth-century observers thought that lightning created them.
7. Mushrooms will grow wide circles if they draw enough food from the soil.

8. In a Kansas field, one ring that has never been disturbed has grown to more than six hundred feet in diameter.

All text and exercises edited from the following primary source:

Brown, Ann Cole, et al. *Grammar and Composition*. Teacher's ed. Atlanta: Houghton Mifflin, 1984. Print. Houghton Mifflin English. Fifth course.