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Concise Sentences

- Sentences are **concise** when they contain only the words they need. To get rid of wordiness, **leave out** unnecessary words and phrases or **substitute** simple, clear words for them.

EXAMPLES:

Just as he got the fish off the hook, it slipped and fell back into the water. (wordy)

As he unhooked the fish, it slipped and fell into the water. (concise)

His model airplane, it broke its wing. (wordy)

The wing on his model airplane broke. (concise)

His model airplane had a broken wing. (concise)

Not very long after that happened, Eli knew he had won. (wordy)

Soon after that, Eli knew he had won. (concise)

A Rewrite each sentence to make it more concise.

1. Linda couldn't come with us on account of she had to work.

Linda couldn't come with us because she had to work.

2. Ruben went to the grocery store but before he went he made a list of all the many things he wanted to buy.

3. The students who are in their first year of college are buying books at the bookstore.

4. This time of the year, with all its many colors, it is my most favorite.

5. Dee knew she was going to pass the test because of the fact that she had studied really hard for many days and nights before the test.

■ **Combining sentences** is another way to eliminate wordiness and make writing more concise.

EXAMPLES: Mr. Nguyen told us about his next door neighbor. Mr. Nguyen's next door neighbor's name is Randy Park, and he appeared on a television talk show. (wordy)

Mr. Nguyen's next door neighbor, Randy Park, appeared on a television talk show. (concise, combined into one sentence)

B Combine each set of sentences into one sentence to eliminate wordiness.

1. Clara's grandfather was a very tall man. Her grandfather had a large mole on his forehead. He had dark eyes, too.

Clara's grandfather, a very tall man with dark eyes, had a large mole on his forehead.

2. Luis wrote the problem on the chalkboard for the class to see. His work still was not clear enough for the class to understand.

3. Dogs know how to bark. They also know how to protect their owners.

4. Three people won the contest. The reward was divided equally among the three contest winners.

5. Marta went to the basketball game. She was expecting to meet some friends. She had invited her friends, and she told them to meet her at the ticket booth.

6. The old two-story house is losing its shingles. The house was built in the 1880s.

▶ ON YOUR OWN... Write a short paragraph on your own paper about an interest or hobby you have. Then read over the paragraph and get rid of unnecessary words or phrases.



STUDENT ACTIVITY 23

Sentence Connection

Directions: Use a conjunction from the list below to combine each pair of simple sentences. You may move word groups and eliminate unnecessary words.

- and** **as** **but** **so**
although **because** **or** **while**

1. I may jog to school. I may take the bus.

2. The bus was late. I ran to school.

3. Janie carefully planted the seeds. The flowers never bloomed.

4. The German shepherd was huge. He was a gentle dog.

5. Max hated the broccoli. He dumped it into the sink.

6. They were watching *Star Trek* on TV. They heard a crash.

7. We were walking to the movie theater. We saw two cars crash.

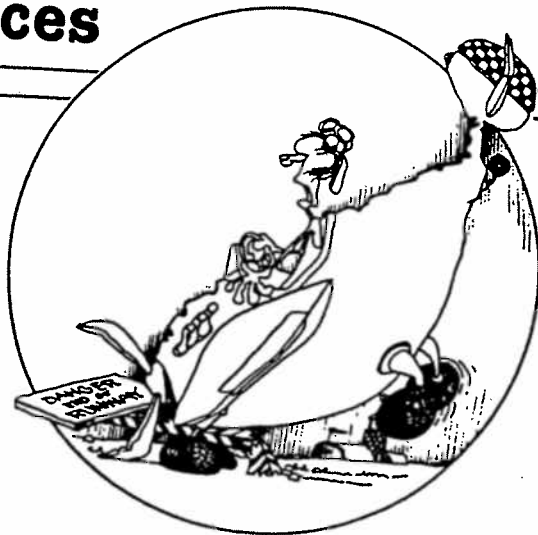
8. I was still hungry. I had eaten a huge lunch.

9. Cindy was tired. She was hungry. She was glad to get home.

10. I sighed happily. I closed my eyes. The sailboat glided over the water.

Avoiding Comma Splices and Run-on Sentences

A **comma splice** is an error made when you connect two simple sentences with only a comma. A **run-on** sentence occurs when two simple sentences are joined without punctuation or a connecting word. Both types of errors cause your sentences to continue on after a complete thought has already been made. Correcting these mistakes may involve using a period, exclamation point, question mark, or semicolon; you may also use the comma with a coordinating conjunction.



Exercise: Place an **RO** in front of each run-on sentence, a **CS** in front of each comma splice, and a **C** in front of each correct sentence. Make any changes necessary to correct each faulty sentence.

Example: CS The chili is really spicy, ^{but} I like it that way.

RO He rode his bike on gravel ^{and} the tires wore out fast.

- _____ 1. No one can eat popcorn like I can a gallon bucket disappears fast.
- _____ 2. The morning smelled like hot tar, the forecast gave no hope for cooler temperatures.
- _____ 3. At least the city workers opened the hydrant the children love the cold spray.
- _____ 4. We're going to the beach do you want to come along?
- _____ 5. Get away from that stove the soup is boiling hot!
- _____ 6. Remember to read all you can, you'll be smarter for it.
- _____ 7. Wednesday is spaghetti night, try to be home in time for supper.
- _____ 8. Let's turn the TV off we want to play Monopoly.
- _____ 9. You spend that play money mighty fast; how about letting someone else buy something?
- _____ 10. The movie was boring we had paid our money and decided to sit through it.
- _____ 11. We hear the ice-cream truck coming do you have any money, Ma?
- _____ 12. The curtains billow into the room the fresh breeze smells like lilacs.
- _____ 13. Crack! The ball was out of the park the crowd went crazy!

Avoiding Rambling Sentences

As you correct any fragments, run-ons, or comma splices you may have in your writing, you must be careful not to use too many *and's*, *but's*, or *so's*. The result could well be a series of rambling sentences.

Exercise: Read the paragraph below. Look and listen for sentences which ramble on and on. Correct these sentences by taking out some (but not all) of the *and's*, *but's*, and *so's*. Make your changes as neatly as possible above each sentence which needs correcting. (Also, correct or add punctuation and capitalization as needed.)

After being flicked off Tom Sawyer's fingers, the pinchbug landed on its back in the aisle of the church and Tom's sore finger immediately went into his mouth as he eyed the beetle. Just then a curious poodle came up the aisle so he saw the pinchbug and started to play with it. There was a yelp, and the pinchbug went flying farther down the aisle. The poodle tried to find pleasure in chasing a fly but soon lost interest. The dog had forgotten that the pinchbug was there and he sat on it so there was a wild yelp and the dog went streaking up the aisle like a woolly comet. The dog then changed its course and jumped into its master's lap but the master tossed the dog out the window and the voice of the distressed dog could be heard loud and clear. After the sermon Tom Sawyer went home quite happy and he didn't mind that the dog had played with his pinchbug but he did not think that it was upright for him to carry it off.

Revising for Smoothness and Clarity

All writing should read smoothly and move clearly (logically) from one point to the next. Linking or transitional words and the repetition of key words or phrases can help make your writing smooth, reading and clear. (See "Transitions" in your handbook index for more information.)

Exercise: Many of the linking words have been taken out of the paragraph below. Read the paragraph and fill in the blanks as you go with a linking word or expression which not only makes sense but also helps the paragraph flow smoothly from one point to the next.

When I was younger, I was always begging my parents to let me cook something by myself. Finally my father said he'd teach me how to fry an egg. What a mess. _____ we got out all the dishes and utensils we needed—a frying pan, potholder, spatula, cup, plate, and a fork. _____ we got the eggs and margarine from the refrigerator. _____ accidentally smashing one egg on the floor and letting one roll into the sink, I finally managed to crack an egg into the _____ and throw the shell in the garbage—after one miss. _____ I heated a little margarine in the frying pan and slowly poured the egg from the cup into the pan. Flipping the egg over when it was done on one side was the hardest part. Melted margarine sure knows how to splatter. _____, when it was time to lift my breakfast out of the pan, I discovered how slippery fried eggs are. _____ a few tries, I did manage to slide that over-easy egg onto the plate, but there was nothing easy about it. _____ it was time to eat. _____ cooking was more work than I had expected, that egg tasted great!