WAYS TO CONNECT CLAUSES IN SENTENCES

If you only use short simple sentences, your writing will seem too simple for academic work. By connecting short sentences to each other, you can make your writing more academic and more interesting. This handout suggests ways you can connect clauses into longer sentences.

The Clause

A clause is like a simple sentence. It expresses a complete idea. A clause must have both a subject and a verb. Here are some examples of clauses:

- the student walked across the concourse
  subject verb
- Jessica has been playing the piano all night
  subject verb
- the table was set for dinner
  subject verb
- the baby cried
  subject verb

The following are not clauses. Can you see why not? Discuss these with your tutor.

- excited about the party
- on the table at the front of the room
- after working all night
- the woman in the red dress

If you have difficulty deciding what is a clause and what isn’t a clause, work on the Learning Centre handout “Subjects and Verbs” before you go further in this handout.

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Connecting Clauses

There are 4 common ways that we join clauses to each other.

Type 1: Use a Comma and a Coordinator

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clause , and , so , but , or , yet , for , nor clause
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e.g. She walked up to the man, and he spoke to her.

Type 2: Use a semi-colon, a transition word or phrase, and a Comma

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clause ; therefore, ; as a result, ; otherwise, ; consequently, ; however, ; on the other hand, ; in contrast, ; nevertheless, ; in addition, ; for example, ; furthermore, ; in fact, clause.
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e.g. It was raining ; therefore, she took her umbrella.
Type 3: Use a Subordinator Between the Two Clauses

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clause
  ↓
  before
  ↓
  clause
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e.g. *He did his homework* before *he turned on the TV.*

Type 4: Use a Subordinator at the Beginning of a Sentence and a comma after the first clause

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before
  ↓
  clause,
  ↓
  clause.
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e.g. *Before he turned on the TV,* he did his homework.

For a more complete list of connecting words and their meanings, see the Learning Centre handout “Connectors: Usage and Meaning”.

J. Robinson/2005