

Additional Sentence Combining Resources



Intervention Central teaches the rules of sentence structure by having student practice the strategy of Sentence Combining.

<http://www.interventioncentral.org/academic-interventions/writing/sentence-combining-teaching-rules-sentence-structure-doing>



This resource provides guidelines for effectively combining shorter, simpler sentences into longer ones. Click on *Full Resource for Printing* to access the resource.

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/972/01/>



This resource from the National Council of Teachers of English includes strategies to teach sentence combining and how to use sentence combining to teach summary writing.

<http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/CNP/0261-august08/NP0261Sentence.pdf>

Sentence Combining

Grades 6-12



A Proven Strategy for Language Standards #1 - #3



What is Sentence Combining?

Combining sentences encourages a writer to take two or more short, choppy sentences and combine them into one effective sentence. By learning this skill, students enhance their writing style. The Sentence Combining Strategy assists students in developing more complex sentence structures over several short practice sessions and should be considered as one component of an overall writing program.

Why Use Sentence Combining?

- It teaches students to use a variety of sentences in their writing.
- It helps improve the overall quality of the writing by increasing the amount and quality of the revision
- The process encourages interesting word choices and transition words.

What Does Research Say?

Despite strong research evidence of its effectiveness, educators don't make sufficient use of sentence combining to help students improve their writing, says a recent article in *Preventing School Failure*:

"Sentence-combining provides structured practice manipulating and rewriting basic or kernel sentences into forms that are more syntactically mature and varied," write the authors.

Students learn to create more mature and interesting sentences by combining short, simple sentences such as "The boy is short. The boy has red hair." A denser sentence such as "the short boy had red hair" or the red-haired boy was short" is more compelling and helps the writer place greater emphasis on the more important and relevant feature, depending on his or her intent.

"Consistently throughout more than 80 studies, sentence combining has positively influenced the ability of students with and without disabilities to create more complex sentences of higher quality," the authors write. "There is also evidence that sentence combining improves revising skills and story writing."

Pairing Students Is Effective for All

Recent studies have shown that pairing students to work on sentence combining is effective even when the students are not skilled writers. For students with disabilities, a further advantage of sentence-combining is that content is provided so that students can focus on expressing themselves in sentences without the additional stress of having to develop the ideas.



How to Teach Sentence Combining

1. Analyze samples of students' writing to determine what skills need to be acquired. Be on the lookout for students whose writing consists of short, choppy sentences, sentences connected by a series of "ands" or sentences that almost always begin in the same manner.
2. Use the students' own writing. Sentence combining is particularly practical for students when they are revising their own writing.
3. Begin with two simple sentences until students understand how to combine sentences effectively. Keep sentences as similar as possible, except for the words to be combined.
4. Start with the base clause—followed by one or more modifying sentences
5. Add connecting words in parentheses following the sentence in which they appear, for example, "I went to sleep. (BECAUSE...)"
6. Underline words in the second sentence that are to be embedded in the base sentence. For example, in the two sentences, "The pie was sweet" and "The pie was delicious", the underlined cue word is delicious. Students could then create the sentence, "The delicious pie was sweet."
7. Once students have practiced combining simple sentences, teachers could move on to combining sets of sentences into paragraphs. Sentences could also be changed for better stylistic flow and rhythm.

"During this process educators should focus on helping the students write better, more meaningful sentences, not on editing the work for spelling mistakes or other technical writing problems," according to Saddler and Asaro-Saddler.

Saddler, B., and Asaro-Saddler, K. (2010). Writing Better Sentences: Sentence-Combining Instruction in the Classroom. *Preventing School Failure*, 54, (3). pages 159-163.