

## Achieving Sentence Variety without Run-Ons or Fragments

## SENTENCE TYPES

**Simple sentences** contain only a main clause.

- Use: make a quick, definitive point; position at the beginning or end of paragraphs; employ as transitions
- Alexander Pope: “A little learning is a dangerous thing.”  
(main clause)

**Compound sentences** contain two or more main clauses joined by coordinating conjunctions.

- Use: compare or contrast two important ideas; position alongside one another
- Bob Edwards: “A little learning is a dangerous thing, but a lot of ignorance is just as bad.”  
(main clause) (coordinating conjunction) (main clause)

**Complex sentences** contain a main clause and at least one subordinate clause.

- Use: highlight an idea in the main clause; deemphasize ideas of lesser importance
- William Allen White:  
“A little learning is not a dangerous thing to one / who does not mistake it for a great deal.”  
(main clause) (subordinating conjunction) (subordinating clause)

**Compound-complex sentences** contain two or more main clauses combined with at least one subordinating clause.

- Use: feature two important ideas in the main clause and deemphasize ideas of lesser importance
- Mark Twain:  
“Never learn to do anything; if you don’t learn, you’ll always find someone else to do it for you.”  
(main clause) (subordinate clause) (main clause)

## Five Useful Ways to Join Ideas

## COORDINATION

- Coordinating Conjunctions (C.C.): FANBOYS- for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so
- Transitional Adverbs (T.A.): See our handout on *Transitional Words and Phrases*
- Independent or Main Clause- A complete sentence
  1. Independent Clause + Comma + C.C. + Independent Clause
  2. Independent Clause + Semicolon + Independent Clause
  3. Independent Clause + Semicolon + T.A. + Comma + Independent Clause

## SUBORDINATION

- Subordinating Conjunctions (S.C.): Examples- after, although, as, as if, as soon as, as though, because, before, if, in order that, since, unless, until, when, whenever, whereas, while, who
- Dependent or Subordinate Clause- A clause that cannot stand alone as a complete sentence
  4. Independent Clause + S.C. + Dependent Clause
  5. S.C. + Dependent Clause + Comma + Independent Clause