Good prose uses a variety of sentence types—simple, compound, and complex. Writing a series of ‘simple’ (subject-predicate) sentences makes writing sound choppy and monotonous. Just as important, heavy reliance on simple sentences doesn’t allow you to show logical relationships between ideas. You can improve your style and clarify the logic of your prose by using sentence combining techniques.

**Combine sentences using coordination when the ideas are equally important:**

--- **Use a coordinating conjunction and comma.** The coordination conjunctions are *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.*

  - My friend is coming to town for the weekend. I’m excited to see him.
  - My friend is coming to town for the weekend, and I’m excited to see him.

--- **Use a semicolon alone or with a conjunctive adverb.** Some commonly used conjunctive adverbs are *afterwards, as a result, consequently, however, in addition, instead, then, therefore.*

  - My computer crashed. I lost all of my files.
  - My computer crashed; I lost all of my files.
  - My computer crashed; consequently, I lost all of my files.

--- **Combine sentences using subordination when one idea is more important than the other.** Some commonly used subordinating conjunctions: *after, although, as if, because, before, even though, since, so that, unless, when, whenever, where, while.*

  - I had a terrible cold. I decided to go to work anyway.
  - Although I had a terrible cold, I decided to go to work anyway.

--- **Turn one idea into an adverb:**

  - Hurricanes lose force as they approach the coast. This happens frequently.
  - Frequently, hurricanes lose force as they approach the coast.

--- **Turn one sentence into an –ing verb phrase:**

  - Jonah did well in the high jump. He came in second.
  - Jonah did well in the high jump, coming in second.

--- **Turn one sentence into an –ed verb phrase:**

  - He won the election easily. He is noted for his honesty.
  - Noted for his honesty, he won the election easily.

--- **Turn one sentence into an appositive:**

  - Margo is a single mother of three. She has a hard time paying her bills.
  - Margo, a single mother of three, has a hard time paying her bills.

--- **Turn one sentence into an adjective clause.** An adjective clause describes a noun. It usually begins with *who, which, or that.* If the clause is an essential modifier, do not enclose it in commas.

  - Margo is a single mother of three. She has a hard time paying her bills.
  - Margo, who is a single mother of three, has a hard time paying her bills.

[updated 1-13]