

COMBINING SENTENCES: COMMAS AND SEMICOLONS

Usually a period separates one complete sentence from another. But sometimes we want to join two sentences that are closely related. Use the following punctuation to make them look right on the page:

1. We can link two sentences by putting in a **coordinator** (coordinating conjunction): *and, but, so, for, yet, or, nor*. Use a comma if the word links two complete sentences—each with its own subject and verb. (Remember that requests are complete sentences even if the subject has been deleted.)

Comma: He pushed the button, and an explosion rocked the bridge.

The police set up roadblocks, but the suspects slipped through.

It rained, so the concert was canceled.

We stayed a month, for food was cheap.

Winter was near, yet the days were balmy.

Send us a check, or pay us at our local office.

They never sent an answer, nor did we expect any.

2. We can link two sentences by putting in an **adverbial connective** (also called conjunctive adverb): *however, therefore, nevertheless, furthermore, moreover, accordingly, besides, in fact, indeed*, and others. This type of connective often actually joins the two sentences, but it may also appear later in the second sentence. Regardless of the position of the connective off from the rest of the second sentence.

Semicolon: The license was revoked; *therefore*, the camp was closed.

The trial was set for June; the defendant had disappeared, *however*.

Raccoons had roamed the campsite; our food, *nevertheless*, was left untouched.

The climbers were inexperienced; *in fact*, one of them had never climbed a mountain.

Note: The commas setting off these connectives from the rest of the second sentence are often left out, especially in informal or journalistic writing.

3. We can link two sentences without any connective. As a general rule, use a *semicolon* (*not* a comma) to show that two such sentences are closely related.

Semicolon: The caretaker knew every student; he never forgot a face.

I pressed the dispenser; it oozed syrup over the ice cream.

We snapped at each other; the heat was driving us mad.

In the space after each passage, put *C* (for comma) or *S* (for semicolon). Insert the comma or semicolon at the point where the two sentences join. If the second part of the passage is not really a complete sentence, leave the space between the sentences blank and put *No* in the space.

1. Black bears are common in the West ____ but grizzlies have become rare. _____
2. 60,000 Mormons arrived in Utah before the railroad ____ many converts came on foot. _____
3. To me, big cities and bright lights are exciting ____ and mountains and trees are boring. _____
4. My family never throws food away ____ we put all leftovers in the icebox. _____
5. My friend was always locking the doors ____ and barring the windows. _____
6. The waiters will have a busy time ____ the club is expecting 250 people. _____
7. Place the key in the ignition ____ turn it to "On." _____
8. Air pollution is not confined to cities like Los Angeles ____ smog, in fact, plagues Missoula, Montana. _____
9. There are two metal clips on each side ____ pop them off with a screwdriver. _____
10. My application went in late ____ therefore, I was turned down. _____
11. Comedians cannot always be witty ____ but they should at least have a pleasant personality. _____
12. Riots against the draft broke out in 1863 ____ almost a hundred registrants were killed. _____
13. The funds were cut off ____ so the building remained unfinished. _____
14. A red knob regulates the gas flow ____ the pilot uses this knob for the correct gas-to-air ratio. _____
15. The bear ate everything ____ but the canvas bag. _____
16. The bridge was already closed ____ yet cars kept driving up. _____
17. We showed our passes ____ the guard would not budge, however. _____
18. Stavros had ____ a criminal record ____ the authorities, therefore, would not give him a visa. _____
19. Humor makes people smile ____ sarcasm makes them wince. _____
20. We cannot ban all insecticides ____ for insects would inherit the world. _____