

Sentence Combining

Exercise 1: The four words below are sentence connecting words. In the passage that follows, put connecting words from the list in the blanks in any way that makes sense.

if *that* *when* *whether*

1. _____

I asked Eydun Andreassen, the folklorist at the University of the Faroe Islands,

2. _____

the pilot whale figures largely in the culture's songs, poems and paintings,
he asked me

3. _____

Americans typically write songs to sliced bread.
Eydun was sorry

4. _____

he could not oblige me with some deep religious connection.
"It's just food," he said with a shrug.

Exercise 2: Study the passage below and note the eight underlined parts. Five of the underlined parts are optional. Three are obligatory. Locate the optional parts and cross them out.

All that he could do was conjure a bank sign that he saw somewhere that had a whale tail on it. "It's just food," he said with a shrug. Trondur Patursson, who is the most famous painter in the Faeroes, creates, among other things, paintings of the *grind* that are shown around the world. The hunt, like a good day fishing, he explained, creates a "red feeling." The sea, creates a "blue feeling." But that's about it. ¹

Exercise 3: The connecting word *that* appears five times in the passage below. After each one, find and underline the nearest verb to the right. Assuming that you crossed out some, but not all, instances of *that*, generalize about your observations. When you crossed out *that*, what appears between the verb and the crossed-out word? When you did not cross out *that*, what appears between the verb and *that*?

Based on the observations you have noted so far in the Exercise 3, what general rule could guide any future decisions about whether to delete *that*?

¹ Reynolds, Susan Salter (2003). "Hunting Whales in West L.A.: Political Correctness, Cultural Imperialism and the Long, Long Journey for the Real Taste of Blubber." Los Angeles Times, April 27, 2003. Adapted from the original.

Sentence Combining

The passage below consists of short, simple sentences that, taken together, constitute a “choppy” style with little sentence variety and unneeded repetition. To remedy this situation, some of the sentences need to be grammatically combined with some others to create longer, complex sentences. The result should create the impression of a “smoother” and more interesting prose. It should also be less repetitive and more concise. Let’s take care to recall that there are many strategies of combining sentences, many of which go well beyond the addition of a simple conjunction like *and* or the change from a period to a semicolon.

One final benefit of sentence combining should be that ideas are grouped together in a way that reflects the overall progression of the topic. In other words, like ideas or continuous topics are grouped, while dissimilar ideas or new topics are highlighted by the beginning of a new sentence. This is not to say that there cannot be transitional words that link one sentence to the next. But this just means that effective sentence combining keeps in mind the flow of topics, new information, and points of emphasis.

Exercise 4: Decide on a grouping strategy for the sentences in the following passage. The best strategy will have four groupings. Do not try to combine the sentences yet.

1. For several years, my husband fought to persuade the Mexican government.
2. The Mexican government was in partnership with Mitsubishi Corporation.
3. He wanted them not to build the world’s largest saltworks in San Ignacio Lagoon.
4. San Ignacio Lagoon is a bay in southern Baja.
5. In San Ignacio Lagoon, gray whales come each year to breed.
6. They come there to calve.
7. They come there to nurse their young.
8. His fight with the Mexican government was an argument he ultimately won.
9. Each year, we visited the lagoon.
10. In the lagoon, the gray whales swim up to the little dories.
11. The little dories are called *pangas*.
12. The mothers push their babies up to the *pangas*.
13. The mothers let you touch them.
14. They let you pat them.
15. They sometimes even let you put your arm in their mouths.
16. They let you scratch their hairy, smelly tongues.
17. We slept in tents.
18. We listened to them at night. ²

² Reynolds, Susan Salter (2003). “Hunting Whales in West L.A.: Political Correctness, Cultural Imperialism and the Long, Long Journey for the Real Taste of Blubber.” Los Angeles Times, April 27, 2003. Adapted from the original.

Exercise 5: The four words below are sentence connecting words. In the passage that follows, put connecting words from the list in the blanks in any way that makes sense. In some cases, you must delete some words in order to make the connecting words fit. In other cases, deleting some words will be optional but will help make the passage less repetitive and more concise.

and (three times)

where (two times)

which (once only)

1. For several years, my husband fought to persuade the Mexican government.

2. the Mexican government was in partnership with Mitsubishi Corporation.

3. He wanted them not to build the world's largest saltworks in San Ignacio Lagoon.

4. San Ignacio Lagoon is a bay in southern Baja.

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Exercise 6:

The four words below are sentence connecting words. In the passage that follows, put connecting words from the list in the blanks in any way that makes sense.

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after *and* *still* *that* *though*

1. Children in the Faeroes grow up eating whale blubber.
2. They often eat it in thin slices.
3. Parents always insist that their children eat blubber.

4. Adults usually eat it as a snack on rye bread or with a piece of fish.
5. There has been much talk and many studies in the past few years about high levels of mercury in whale meat, and other toxins in the blubber.
6. Recent studies of Faeroese children suggest a correlation between high levels of mercury intake and some subtle aspects of neurological development.
7. The Faeroese stopped eating the livers and kidneys of whales.
8. The livers and kidneys were once considered delicacies.

9. Studies in the late 1970s found high levels of toxins in those organs.

10. Island parents are suspicious of reports from some countries.

11. These countries have pleaded with the Faeroese for years to stop hunting whales.
12. These countries have vilified the Faroese in the world's press.

13. They have shamed the Faroese in front of younger generations.³

³ Reynolds, Susan Salter (2003). "Hunting Whales in West L.A.: Political Correctness, Cultural Imperialism and the Long, Long Journey for the Real Taste of Blubber." Los Angeles Times, April 27, 2003. Adapted from the original.