

Combining Independent Clauses

Independent Clause: a clause (a group of words with a subject and verb) that expresses a complete thought and can stand on its own as a complete sentence

Examples (from YourDictionary.com):

For each example below, the subject is in blue and the verb is in green.

- I enjoy sitting by the fireplace and reading.
- Waiting to have my car's oil changed is boring.
- She wants to travel the world and see wonderful sights.
- Our planets revolve around the sun.
- The professor always comes to class fully prepared.
- Hurricanes strengthen over warm waters.

Because independent clauses can operate as complete sentences, special care is needed when you combine them. You not only need to signal to the reader that you are combining complete thoughts, but you also need to choose the combination method that best conveys the relationship between those thoughts. Here are the three methods you can use to combine them:

1. COMMA AND COORDINATING CONJUNCTION:

<p>Coordinating Conjunctions</p> <p>, for , and , nor , but , or , yet , so</p>
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Ex. Michael Pollan is an author. He wrote *Omnivore's Dilemma*.

→ Michael Pollan is an author, **and** he wrote *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.

Note: This method is best when you have a relatively simple relationship between independent clauses. Also, everything before the comma must be able to stand alone as a sentence, and everything after the coordinating conjunction must be able to stand as a complete sentence. Otherwise, you use the conjunction but skip the comma:

Michael Pollan is an author and wrote *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.

2. SEMICOLON:

Ex. *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is a popular book. It is rated 4.5 stars on Amazon.

→ *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is a popular book; it is rated 4.5 stars on Amazon.

Note: This method is best when the independent clauses are so obviously related that you do not need to express the connection between them. Note that everything before the semicolon is an independent clause, and everything after the semicolon is an independent clause. Also, note that the independent clause after the semicolon starts with a lower-case letter.

3. SEMICOLON WITH A LONG JOINING WORD/PHRASE AND COMMA:

Some Examples of Long Joining Words (There are many more than this!)

; consequently,	; thus,	; as a result,	; furthermore,
; moreover,	; however,	; on the other hand,	; in fact,
; indeed,	; meanwhile,	; in addition,	; instead,

Ex. Michael Pollan has written extensively about America's food culture. *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, *Cooked*, and *Food Rules* all touch on that subject.

→ Michael Pollan has written extensively about America's food culture; **indeed**, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, *Cooked*, and *Food Rules* all touch on that subject.

Note: This method is best when the relationship between independent clauses is slightly more complex because the long joining words can better capture those nuances. Note that everything before the semicolon is an independent clause, and everything after the long joining word/phrase and comma is an independent clause. Don't forget the comma after the long joining word/phrase!