

Using Semicolons

When you write a first draft, ideas often come just one at a time. Consequently, your first draft may have many short sentences. However, when you read your draft over, you will realize that some of these sentences are related to each other. When you find these pairs of sentences, you'll need to connect them. There are many ways to connect sentences. Semicolons are one of these ways. When you decide to use a semicolon to connect sentences, make sure that the sentences are very closely related and equally important.

Related Sentences:	Our drama department is quite active. It produces three plays each year.
Combined:	Our drama department is quite active; it produces three plays each year.

Sentences that are not closely related should not be combined.

Unrelated Sentences:	I had never auditioned before. The competition was surprisingly fierce.
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As you learn to use semicolons to connect related sentences, you will find that you will be able to express complicated thoughts easily. Consequently, your writing will be far more likely to impress your readers; you may even impress yourself.

DIRECTIONS Decide whether each pair of sentences should be combined. Make your changes on the worksheet.

If a pair should be combined, replace the period with a semicolon.

If a pair should not be combined, circle the period.

EXAMPLES	The audience was wildly enthusiastic; they didn't even seem to notice when we flubbed our lines.
	Our costumes were not backstage; we hadn't expected to perform in ordinary clothes.



1. When I started high school, I knew I wanted to join the drama department. Performing on stage was a dream of mine.
2. Besides taking classes in theater, I would be auditioning for roles. As a child, I was very self-conscious.
3. Upperclassmen usually got the leading roles. Freshmen and sophomores had to pay their dues by working as stagehands.
4. I remember the first play of the season—A Midsummer Night’s Dream. It has always been one of my favorites.
5. Playing Puck would be a dream come true. I studied the role until I had memorized every line, right down to the stage directions.
6. I knew it was a long shot, but I tried out for the role. The microphone was at exactly the wrong angle.
7. As an understudy, you must learn the lines as though you actually had the role. It was an easy job for me.
8. When opening night was a week away, there was no indication that I would be needed. Our Puck, Tad MacIntyre, was as healthy as an aerobics instructor.
9. Suddenly, it happened. Tad got laryngitis the night before we opened.
10. I had the opportunity I had dreamed about. Tad recovered quickly and was back onstage after three nights.

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Answer Key

Answer Keys:

Answers will vary. These are sample answers.

1. When I started high school, I knew I wanted to join the drama department; performing on stage was a dream of mine.
2. Sentences should not be combined.
3. Upperclassmen usually got the leading roles; freshmen and sophomores had to pay their dues by working as stagehands.
4. I remember the first play of the season—A Midsummer Night’s Dream; it has always been one of my favorites.
5. Playing Puck would be a dream come true; I studied the role until I had memorized every line, right down to the stage directions.
6. Sentences should not be combined.
7. As an understudy, you must learn the lines as though you actually had the role; it was an easy job for me.
8. When opening night was a week away, there was no indication that I would be needed; our Puck, Tad MacIntyre, was as healthy as an aerobics instructor.
9. Suddenly, it happened; Tad got laryngitis the night before we opened.
10. Sentences should not be combined.