

Combining choppy sentences

Short sentences demand attention, so you should use them primarily for emphasis. Too many short sentences, one after the other, make for a choppy style.

If an idea is not important enough to deserve its own sentence, try combining it with a sentence close by. Put any minor ideas in subordinate structures such as phrases or subordinate clauses.

- ▶ We keep our use of insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides to a minimum. ^{because we} We are concerned about their effect on the environment.

A minor idea is now expressed in a subordinate clause beginning with *because*.

- ▶ The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, ^{is} a 184-mile waterway constructed in the 1800s. ^{It} was a major source of transportation for goods during the Civil War.

A minor idea is now expressed in an appositive phrase (*a 184-mile waterway constructed in the 1800s*).

- ▶ ~~Sister Consilio was~~ ^E enveloped in a black robe with only her face and hands visible. ^{Sister Consilio} ~~She~~ was an imposing figure.

A minor idea is now expressed in a participial phrase beginning with *Enveloped*.

Although subordination is ordinarily the most effective technique for combining short, choppy sentences, coordination is appropriate when the ideas are equal in importance.

- ▶ The hospital decides when patients sleep. ^{and} ~~It~~ dictates when they eat. ^{It} tells them when they may be with family.

Equivalent ideas are expressed as parallel elements of a compound predicate: *decides . . . dictates . . . tells*.