

## Lesson Skill: Combining ideas into an effective sentence

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### Strand Writing

**SOL** 6.7, 6.8

7.7, 7.8

8.7, 8.8

### Materials

- Available technology
- Copies of the attached Combining Sentences: Green, Red, or Yellow Light? worksheet

### Lesson

1. Display the following sentences. Ask students to give the sentences a green light for grammatically correct or a red light for grammatically incorrect.

The boys were healthy and happy during the school year. (green light)

Because the boys were healthy and happy during the school year. (red light)

2. Remind students that changing an independent clause into a dependent clause changes a perfectly good sentence into a fragment.
3. Introduce the idea of a “yellow-light sentence”—i.e., a sentence that is complete but is awkward, unclear, or wordy, such as the following:

The boys were healthy, and it was noted that they were happy during the school year.

The health and happiness of the boys was maintained during the school year.

Write these sentences on the board, and lead students in rewriting them, using modifiers, standard coordination, and/or subordination.

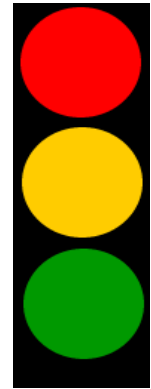
4. Again using available technology, model the following example from the released 2004 Grade 8 SOL English Writing test item “Colonial Fashions”:

<b>Original sentences:</b> In 1653, two women in Massachusetts were arrested. The cause of their arrest was wearing silk hoods and scarves.			
	<b>Rewrite options</b>	<b>Color</b>	<b>Reason</b>
<b>A</b>	In 1653, two women in Massachusetts were arrested, and the cause was wearing silk hoods and scarves.	yellow	Awkward—"the cause was"
<b>B</b>	In 1653, two women in Massachusetts were arrested, the cause being they wore silk hoods and scarves.	red	Run-on sentence
<b>C</b>	In 1653, two women in Massachusetts, arrested for wearing silk hoods and scarves, were detained by police.	yellow	Was Massachusetts arrested? Confusing.
<b>D</b>	In 1653, two women in Massachusetts were arrested for wearing silk hoods and scarves.	green	Clear and concise

5. Distribute copies of the attached Combining Sentences: Green, Red, or Yellow Light? worksheet, and have students work in small cooperative learning groups to mark the sentences as either green-, red-, or yellow-light sentences. Have them give the reasons for their decisions.
6. Have each group present their conclusions. Lead a discussion about the answers and the reasons why some sentences are yellow light or red light.

**Strategies for differentiation:**

- Use the same format on the handout, provide students with shorter sentences to analyze.
- Have students practice changing yellow and red light sentences to make them green light sentences.



### Combining Sentences: Green, Red, or Yellow Light?

In each example below, read the original sentences that are to be combined. Then, read the rewrite options for combining the sentences.

- Mark a combined sentence red if it is an incomplete or run-on sentence.
- Mark a combined sentence yellow if it is awkward, unclear, or wordy.
- Mark a combined sentence green if it is the best sentence combination.

Released 2006 Grade 8 SOL English Writing Test Item: “Signs of Friendship”

<b>Original sentences:</b> The popular local police band, The Blue Badges, was coming to play a concert at a school assembly. The concert was to promote Law Enforcement Week.			
	<b>Rewrite options</b>	<b>Color</b>	<b>Reason</b>
<b>A</b>	The popular local police band, The Blue Badges, coming to play a concert promoting Law Enforcement Week at a school assembly.		
<b>B</b>	The popular local police band, The Blue Badges, was coming to a school assembly to promote Law Enforcement Week, and playing a concert.		
<b>C</b>	The popular local police band, The Blue Badges, was promoting Law Enforcement Week and was coming to play a concert and the concert was at a school assembly.		
<b>D</b>	The popular local police band, The Blue Badges, was coming to play a concert at a school assembly to promote Law Enforcement Week.		

Released 2006 Grade 8 SOL English Writing Test Item: "How Do Whales and Dolphins Sleep Without Drowning?"

<b>Original sentences:</b> Scientists have observed them at zoos and aquariums. Scientists have also observed them in the wild to see when and how they sleep.			
	<b>Rewrite options</b>	<b>Color</b>	<b>Reason</b>
<b>A</b>	In zoos and at aquariums they have been observed by scientists and also in the wild to see when and how they sleep.		
<b>B</b>	To see how and when they were observed by scientists, they sleep in zoos, at aquariums, and in the wild.		
<b>C</b>	Observing them in the wild, scientists observed them to see when and how they sleep in zoos and at aquariums.		
<b>D</b>	Scientists have observed them at zoos, at aquariums, and in the wild to see when and how they sleep.		

Combining Sentences: Green, Red, or Yellow Light? continued

Released 2001 Grade 8 SOL English Writing Test Item: "Mysterious Mail"

<b>Original sentences:</b> I finally got my chance. I learned that solving a mystery is a lot tougher than I thought.			
	<b>Rewrite options</b>	<b>Color</b>	<b>Reason</b>
<b>A</b>	I finally got my chance, I learned that solving a mystery is a lot tougher than I thought.		
<b>B</b>	When I finally got my chance, I learned that solving a mystery is a lot tougher than I thought.		
<b>C</b>	Got my chance finally, and learned that solving a mystery is a lot tougher than I thought.		
<b>D</b>	I learned that solving a mystery is a lot tougher than I thought and I finally got my chance.		

Released 2005 Grade 8 SOL English Writing Test Item: "Stage Fright"

<b>Original sentences:</b> She told Julia how proud she would be of her. She would be proud to see her standing up on the stage reading her poem.			
	<b>Rewrite options</b>	<b>Color</b>	<b>Reason</b>
<b>A</b>	She told Julia how proud to see her she was standing up on the stage, reading her poem.		
<b>B</b>	She told Julia how proud she would be to see her standing up on the stage reading her poem.		
<b>C</b>	She told Julia how proud she would be standing up on the stage and seeing her reading her poem.		
<b>D</b>	She told Julia how proud she would be to see her standing up on the stage, reading her poem.		