Subordination and Coordination Errors

1. Illogical coordination

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| Typical error: | Computers were first introduced to the office environment in the late 60s, and they are less expensive now than they were then. (The two ideas expressed here are not logically related, so they should not be coordinated.) |
| Correct: | Computers were first introduced to the office environment in the late 60s, and they have since become an integral part of office routine. |
| Typical error: | Lisa tried to get in through the kitchen window, but she’s a little on the heavy side. (The reader has to think twice to get the relationship between the two ideas.) |
| Correct: | Lisa tried to get in through the kitchen window, but the window was too small for her to squeeze through. |
| Typical error: | The university library has access to a number of data bases, and students can use the new touch-tone service to reserve books. (The two ideas are unrelated and so should not be coordinated.) |
| Correct: | The university library has access to a number of data bases, and students can learn how to access these resources by attending an information session being held this Friday. |

1. Overuse of coordination

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| Typical error: | At times, a series of less complex sentences is best, and this is especially the case when you may want to make each idea or detail stand out as equally important, but at most times, however, you will want to make one idea stand out and you will want to present that idea along with secondary details. |
| Correct: | At times, a series of less complex sentences is best, and this is especially the case when you may want to make each idea or detail stand out as equally important. At most times ; however, you will want to make one idea stand out and to present that idea along with secondary details. |
| Typical error: | The gulf between the haves and have-nots has widened considerably in the last two decades, and there are several identified causes for this state of affairs, one being that information technology quickly made redundant the skills of a whole generation, which immediately placed those people outside the job market, and another is that government economic policies have pandered to multi-national corporations. |
| Correct: | The gulf between the haves and have-nots has widened considerably in the last two decades. Several changes explain this state of affairs. One is that information technology quickly made redundant the skills of a whole generation, which immediately placed those people outside the job market. Another is that government economic policies have pandered to multi-national corporations. |

Subordination Errors

1. Overuse of subordination of clauses

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| Typical error: | When I met John, which is twenty years ago now, he was working at Smith’s which was a law firm that had offices above the cafe where I used to have my morning cup of coffee. |
| Correct: | When I met John twenty years ago, he was working at Smith’s, a law firm with offices above a cafe where I used to stop to have my morning cup of coffee. |
| Typical error: | In the middle of a traffic island which is off the north-east corner of the park, there is a plaque, which is made of brass, which marks the spot where the famous hanging tree once stood. |
| Correct: | In the middle of a traffic island off the north-east corner of the park, there is a brass plaque which marks the spot where the famous hanging tree once stood. |
| Typical error: | After work, when he feels he has the time and energy, and when weather permits, Brian takes his dog, Max, who is a golden retriever, to the ravine for a good run because Max is usually desperate for some exercise after he has spent the day cooped up in the house. |
| Correct: | After work, when time, energy, and weather permit, Brian takes his dog, Max, a golden retriever, to the ravine for a good run. Max is usually desperate for some exercise after spending the day cooped up in the house. |

1. Misplacement of the most important information

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| Typical error: | While I discovered this old love-letter folded neatly between two pages, I was browsing through a book at the library. (The most important idea needs to be put in the main clause. Browsing through a book does not strike the reader as being as important or significant as discovering a love-letter.) |
| Correct: | While I was browsing through a book at the library yesterday, I discovered this old love-letter folded neatly between two pages. |
| Typical error: | Although Marco gave a brilliant performance of Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata, he had injured his hand the day before. (The conjunction although is misplaced.) |
| Correct: | Although he had injured his hand the day before, Marco gave a brilliant performance of Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata. |
| Typical error: | I was crossing the bridge while a car chase went screaming past me. (The conjunction while is misplaced.) |
| Correct: | While I was crossing the bridge, a car chase went screaming past me. |

1. Illogical relationships created through incorrect use of subordinating conjunctions

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| Typical error: | Because it was extremely dry outside, the family decided to organize a Weiner roast. (People do not usually decide on an open fire outdoors because it is dry, but rather in spite of it.) |
| Correct: | Although it was extremely dry outside, the family decided to organize a Weiner roast. |
| Typical error: | When she spent many hours studying, she needed high marks to get the scholarship. (The relationship should be cause (scholarship) and effect (many hours), not time.) |
| Correct: | She needed high marks to get the scholarship, so she spent many hours studying. |
| Typical error: | Although you put your hand on a hot burner, you will be burned. (The relationship is cause/effect, not contrast.) |
| Correct: | If you put your hand on a hot burner, you will be burned. |