

**Module 1, Lesson 12: Compounds on the Main Line**

**Lecture Notes**

In 1990, Michael Jordan scored a career-high 69 points. Rookie Stacey King made one free throw. In an interview after the game he said, "I'll always remember this as the night when Michael Jordan and I combined to score 70 points."

This is a brilliant and hilarious use of the compound subject. The verb *scored* has two subjects: *Michael Jordan and I*.

Any spot on the main line--Subject, Verb, Object, or Complement--can be compounded.

*The Owl and the Pussycat went to sea in a beautiful pea-green boat.*

Two subjects share one verb.

*I sang and danced.*

One subject shares two verbs.

*Gabriela ate lobster and pork rinds.*

Two objects share one verb.

*You are beautiful but mean.*

Two predicate nominatives share one linking verb.

You can combine compounds in any combination. So you could have: *The owl and the pussycat ate rodents and cat food.* (Compound subject and compound direct objects.)

**Compound elements are joined together by a conjunction (usually and, occasionally but) and no comma.**

A comma with a conjunction indicates a compound sentence. A compound sentence is two separate main clauses joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

There are only seven coordinating conjunctions:

* For
* And
* Nor
* But
* Or
* Yet
* So

You can remember them by using the acronym FANBOYS.

A compound sentence that has conjunction but no comma is a **run-on sentence.**

A compound sentence that has a comma but no conjunction is called a **comma splice.**

A compound sentence links one independent Subject-Verb nexus to another independent Subject-Verb nexus to form a single sentence.

*I sang. I danced.* Two separate sentences.

*I sang, and I danced.* Compound sentence.

*I sang and danced.* Compound verb.

While all of these are grammatically correct, the first two feel redundant. It makes the most sense to use a compound verb.

What about these?

*The owl hooted. The pussycat meowed.* Two separate sentences.

*The owl hooted, and the pussycat meowed.* Compound sentence.

*The owl and the pussycat hooted and meowed.* Compound subject and compound verb*.*

Those two actions don't feel closely enough related to be a compound subject and compound verb. The first or second options make more sense.

Here's another example:

*I had never been struck in the face before and sat stunned for several seconds.*

These two verbs do have the same subject (*I*), but the don't combine very well for a couple of reasons:

1. The first verb is passive and the second is active.
2. The two actions are nearly a closely related as "I sang and danced."

We could correct this by saying, *I had never been struck in the face before, so I sat there stunned for several seconds.* (Compound Sentence)

Or even, *I had never been struck in the face before. I sat there stunned.*

Grammar isn't just about grammar. Grammar reflects a deeper logic. Stacey King’s joke about combining for 70 points with Michael Jordan is in part a grammar joke. The compound subject—Michael Jordan and I—is technically correct. They DID combine for 70 points. But that compound subject also implies an equality that is ridiculous and funny.

Grammar is a kind of logic. Stacey King was misusing that logic to be funny. Most of the time, you’re not trying to be funny with your grammar, so you want your grammar to actually reflect your logic, not undermine it.