**Sentence Types and Functions**

**Communication does not happen on its own**

It takes a lot of learning and information to be able to communicate with another human being. One piece of that work is to learn about the different types of sentences the English language uses to make communication clear and informative. Using the right sentence with the right sentence structure is the key to great communication.

**What is a sentence?**

## Before dealing with the types of sentences, let us examine what a sentence is.

## A **sentence** is a set of grammatically arranged words that conveys complete sense.

**\*Types of Sentences based on Structure**

In English language, based on the structure, there are four types of sentences. They are :

1. [**Simple sentence**](https://typesofsentences.com/simple-sentence/)
2. [**Compound sentence**](https://typesofsentences.com/compound-sentence/)
3. [**Complex sentence**](https://typesofsentences.com/complex-sentence/)
4. [**Compound-Complex sentence**](https://typesofsentences.com/compound-complex-sentence/)

**Information about clauses that you should know:**

Before delving into the details of sentence structures, let us learn some basic facts about clauses because all sentences consist of clauses. Some sentences consist of only one clause (simple sentence) whereas some sentences may contain several clauses (complex, compound, or complex- compound sentences). A clause should have a subject and predicate of its own and should express a thought. There are two types of clauses, namely,

***Independent clause or main clause***

An**Independent clause**is a clause that has a subject and a predicate of its own and makes good sense by itself. In other words, it can be said that an **Independent clause**can stand by itself as a sentence. Therefore, it is called an**Independent clause.** It is also called main clause, principal clause, and co- ordinate clause.

***Dependent clause or subordinate clause***

A**Dependent clause,**also called a subordinate clause, is a clause that is a part of a sentence. It cannot stand on its own and make complete sense. It must depend on the main clause to have complete sense. For this reason, it is called a dependent clause.

As a basic example, a sentence which shows an**Independent clause, and** a **Dependent clause**is given hereunder.

* They went home when the night came.

In the above sentence,” They went home” is the independent clause because it has got a subject (They) and a predicate (went home), and it expresses a complete idea. It can stand as a sentence by itself. On the other hand, the clause, ” when the night came.” cannot stand on its own and make complete sense. It is **dependent**on the**main clause,**“They went home”. So “when the night came***“*** is a **dependent clause.**

Now let us study the sentence structures one by one.

**1. The simple sentence**

Simple sentences are one of the 4 types of sentences based on structure. While it is the easiest sentence to create, it does have some rules you must follow. Along with being one independent clause there are aspects that need to be part of the sentence:

It must have a subject and a verb.

It must express a complete thought.

It can only have one clause.

That is simple and straightforward.  Here are a few **examples of a simple sentence:**

* I ran out of paper for the printer.
* The cake smells good.
* Can I have some milk to drink, please?
* She went to the store.

These are quite simple and quite easy sentences to create and use.

**2. The compound sentence**

Compound sentences contain at least two independent clauses that have related ideas. These clauses are joined using a coordinating conjunction, a correlative conjunction, semicolon, or a **conjugative adverb**

Here are a few examples of compound sentences:

* The photographer wiggled his bells, and the baby smiled.
* I arrived late; however, the class had not begun.
* It was hot outside, but the ice cream did not melt.

***How to form compound sentences?***

We can combine two simple sentences only if they are related. You cannot pick two completely different simple sentences, link them together, and claim you have made a compound sentence. What you made was an English mess. **For example**, let us take the two simple sentences given below.

* I want to play chess. He will go to Delhi tomorrow.

The above two sentences have no relation to each other. Therefore, they cannot be combined.

Now look at the following sentences

* I want to buy a scooter. I haven’t sufficient money.

Above sentences have relation with each other. They can be combined to form a compound sentence as shown below:

* I want to buy a scooter, but I haven’t sufficient money.

**Compound sentences can be formed using any one of the following four methods as the situation demands.**

* **Using coordinating conjunction**
* **Using correlative conjunction**
* **Using semicolon**
* **Using conjugative adverb**

**Forming compound sentences using a coordinating conjunction**

We know that there are seven **coordinating conjunctions**in English language, and they are: For, **A**nd, **N**or, **B**ut, **O**r, **Y**et, and **S**o (Acronym: **FANBOYS**).

When we join two independent clauses with a coordinate conjunction to form a compound sentence, we must choose the most suitable one for the context.

**Punctuation rule**: The coordinate conjunction must be preceded by a comma.

**Examples:**

* I ran to class, **but** my friend walked.
* Ann went to her friend’s house,**and** her sister accompanied her.
* I went quickly, **for** I had to attend a meeting at 9.00 A.M.

If the independent sentences to be joined are short and closely related either a comma or a coordinating conjunction are sufficient for joining the same.

**Example:**

* Ann opened the door and Jill took the bag inside. (No comma)
* Ann opened the door, Jill took the bag inside. (Only comma)

**Forming compound sentences using a correlative conjunction**

We know that**correlative conjunction**s are paired conjunctions, that are always used together. Some of the most common **correlative conjunction**s are:

**not only… but also**

**either…or**

**neither…nor**

***No sooner*** … **than**

We can join two independent clauses using a pair of **correlative conjunction**s. But while choosing a **correlative conjunction** to form a compound sentence, care must be taken to select the most suitable conjunction capable of expressing the relationship between the two independent clauses.

**Punctuation rule:** A comma must come before the conjunction that introduces the second independent clause.

**Examples:**

* John is ***not only*** very handsome, ***but also*** is highly intelligent.
* You can ***either*** go with Jim in his car or go by bus afterwards.
* I **neither** know, **nor**wish to know about Jill’s whereabouts.
* ***No sooner*** had I reached the hall,**than** the meeting started.

**Forming compound sentences using semicolon**

If the two independent sentences to be joined are closely related, we can join them only with a semicolon.

**Examples:**

* I wanted to play caroms; my friend wanted to play chess.
* Jill filled the bucket; Jack carried it.
* I brought the rope; father tied the knot.

**Forming compound sentences using conjunctive adverb**

We know that conjunctive adverbs are adverbs used as conjunction to join two independent clauses. Thus, using conjunctive adverbs too, we can form compound sentences. There are a lot of conjunctive adverbs in English language. When we choose a conjunctive adverb to join two independent clauses, care must be given to select one that is most suited to the relationship of the two clauses.

**Punctuation rule:** A semicolon precedes**conjunctive adverb** and a comma after it.

**Examples:**

* I was awake the whole night; therefore, I am feeling sleepy now.
* Jack misbehaved in the class; as a result, he got punishment from his teacher.
* We have not received your reservation; therefore, our assumption is that you will not be attending the meeting.

**3. The complex sentence**

**The complex** **sentence** is a sentence that consists of an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses, introduced, and joined with the linking word, called subordinating conjunctions. There are a lot of subordinate conjunctions in English language. **Some of the commonly used subordinate conjunctions are:** *as, as if, before, after, because, though, even though, while, when, whenever, if, during, as soon as, as long as, since, until, unless, where, and wherever*

Some examples of complex sentences are as follows:

* **As the bridge wasn’t properly maintained by the government***,*it fell down.
* **Whenever they eat at this restaurant***,*they order a hamburger and fries.
* He’ll be able to maintain a healthy weight **if he keeps exercising.**
* **As the world is getting warmer,** polar bears are in danger of becoming extinct.

In the above complex sentences, the dependent clauses are highlighted. A subordinate conjunction introduces and links each of the dependent clauses to the independent clause. The dependent clause may be an adverb clause, a noun clause, or a relative clause.

Notice that the independent clause does not have to be the first clause in the sentence. When the dependent clause is placed first, we generally put a comma after it. But in case the independent clause comes first no comma is usually needed.

**Example:**

* **If he studies well,** he will pass the test.

He will pass the test **if he studies well.**

**4. The compound-complex sentence**

To make a compound-complex sentence, you need at least two independent clauses, a conjunction, and one or more dependent clauses (subordinate clauses).

To make it simple, you are combining two sentence types together. That is, a complex and compound sentence are combined to form a**compound-complex sentence.**Some examples will help you:

* We did not win the game, but we were not unhappy because we, the beginners, had faced the veterans confidently.

We did not win the game **– Independent clause**

we were not unhappy **– Independent clause**

but **– Coordinating conjunction**

(because we, the beginners, had faced the veterans confidently). **– Dependent clause**

because **– Subordinating conjunction**

In the above example, there are two Independent clauses combined with the coordinating conjunction” but”, and one dependent clause connected to the independent clause with the subordinating conjunction, “because”

* The flower girl was crying because she could not sell her flowers till evening, but when the gentleman bought the entire flower basket, she became happy.

The flower girl was crying **– Independent clause**

she became happy **– Independent clause**

(because she could not sell her flowers till evening) **– Dependent clause**

(when the gentleman bought the entire flower basket) **– Dependent clause**

but **– Coordinating conjunction**

when, because **– Subordinating conjunctions**

In the above example, there are two complex sentences (each consisting of one independent clause and one dependent clause), combined with the coordinating conjunction” but”. The dependent clause of the first complex sentence is connected to the independent clause with the subordinating conjunction,” because” and the second complex sentence is connected to the independent clause with the subordinating conjunction, “when”.

* She loved me for the dangers that I had faced to marry her, and I loved her because she loved me.

She loved me for the dangers **– Independent clause**

I loved her **– Independent clause**

(that I had faced to marry her) **– Dependent clause**

because she loved me **– Dependent clause**

and **– Coordinating conjunction**

that, because **– Subordinating conjunctions**

Above example also has two complex sentences connected with the coordinating conjunction, “and”.

As a compound-complex sentence is a combination of complex and compound sentences, so all the rules relevant to both complex sentences and compound sentences are to be observed while forming compound-complex sentences too.

## **Types of Sentences based on Function**

Based on function, there are four sentence types in the English language. They are:

1. [**Declarative sentence**](https://typesofsentences.com/declarative-sentence/) (The statement)
2. [**Interrogative sentence**](https://typesofsentences.com/interrogative-sentence/) (The question)
3. [**Exclamatory sentence**](https://typesofsentences.com/exclamatory-sentence/) (The exclamation)
4. [**Imperative sentence**](https://typesofsentences.com/imperative-sentence/) (The command)

Each sentence type has its own purpose and use. They do not cross over or impose their way on the other sentence’s purpose

* 1. **Declarative sentence**

A**Declarative sentence** is a type of sentence that expresses an opinion or simply makes a statement. In other words, it makes a declaration. This type of sentence ends with a period (i.e., a full-stop).

**Examples:**

● I want to be a good translator. (a statement)

###  ● I am very happy today. (a feeling)

###  **2. Imperative sentence.**

We use an *imperative sentence* to make a request or to give a command. Imperative sentences usually end with a period (i.e., a full stop), but under certain circumstances, it can end with a note of exclamation (i.e., exclamation mark).

**Examples:**

● Please sit down.

● need you to sit down now!

* 1. **Interrogative sentence.**

An *interrogative sentence* asks a question. Interrogative sentences must end with a note of interrogation (i.e., question mark)

**Examples:**

● When are you going to submit your assignment?

 ● Do you know him?

* 1. **Exclamatory sentence.**

An *exclamatory sentence* expresses overflow of emotions. These emotions can be of happiness, wonder, sorrow, anger, etc.

**Examples:**

● What a day it was!

 ● I cannot believe he would do that!

# What Are the Functional Purposes of each Type of Sentence?

Because each type of sentence can serve various functions, the writer should use the type of sentence that best communicates the purpose of his or her idea.

* Choose the sentence type that will most clearly and accurately convey the logic of your idea.
* Consider the amount of information your readers need, and consider the links the readers need to process the information.
* Vary sentence structures to pace your readers through your argument.

**Functions of Simple Sentences**

Use simple sentences when presenting a limited amount of information. Although simple sentences may be shorter, they are not any less academic than other sentence types.

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| --- | --- |
| To declare a direct statement | * First, I will give background information about my project.
* This conclusion is supported by extensive evidence.
 |
| To display a simple list | * The researchers created their hypothesis, conducted some tests, and drew their conclusions.
* My evidence comes from journal articles, periodicals, and books.
 |
| To give concise directions | * Please consider my application for the internship.
* Turn to Table 1 in the appendix.
 |
| To ask a question | * What is the true meaning of the poem?
* What will this study mean to medical research in a decade?
 |

**Functions of Compound, Complex, and Compound-Complex Sentences**

Compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences can serve similar purposes. The writer can tailor the amount of information he or she provides by adding independent and dependent clauses to simple sentences.

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| To combine similar ideas | * **Compound**: Recycling is an effective way of helping the environment, and everyone should recycle at home.
* **Complex**: Since recycling is an effective way of helping the environment, everyone should recycle at home.
* **Compound-Complex**: Since recycling is an effective way of helping the environment, everyone should recycle at home; we can all work

together to protect our planet. |
| To compare or contrast ideas | * **Compound**: Van Gogh was a talented and successful artist, but he had intense personal issues.
* **Complex**: Although he was a talented and successful artist, Van Gogh had intense personal issues.
* **Compound-Complex**: Although he was a talented and successful artist, Van Gogh had intense personal issues; indeed, many say his

inner turmoil contributed to his beautiful art. |
| To convey cause and effect or chain ofEvents | * **Compound**: The researchers did not come to the correct conclusion, so they restructured their hypothesis.
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|  | * **Complex**: Since the researchers did not come to the correct conclusion, they restructured their hypothesis.
* **Compound-Complex**: Since the researchers did not come to the correct conclusion, they restructured their hypothesis, and they will

attempt the experiment again. |
| To elaborate on a claim or extend reasoning | * **Compound**: Cell phones should not be permitted in class, for they distract students and teachers.
* **Complex**: Since cell phones distract students and teachers, they should not be used in class.
* **Compound-Complex**: Since cell phones distract students and teachers, they should not be used in class, and I encourage faculty to

forbid their use. |

**Common Sentence Errors**

There are numerous grammatical elements that can create sentence errors, including sentence fragments, run-on sentences and comma splices, lack of subject-verb agreement, nonstandard verb forms and inconsistent verb tense, and faulty pronoun case and reference.

• **Sentence fragments**: a group of words incorrectly punctuated as if it were a complete sentence that lacks a subject, verb, or both; or is a dependent clause that is not attached to an independent clause

*Example of a fragment*: Shows no improvement in any of the vital signs.

The sentence above is a fragment since there is no subject (*Who* shows no improvement?). Fragments can be corrected by identifying the missing element and including it.

*Revision*: The patient shows no improvement in any of the vital signs.

Here is an example of a fragment with a missing predicate, or action:

*Example of a fragment*: The doctors, who were using peer-reviewed research articles that contributed to the body of knowledge in their fields, which was obstetrics.

Notice here that although the sentence is quite long, it still contains no action (What are the doctors *doing*?). Once identified, the sentence can be corrected easily.

Revision: The doctors, who were using peer-reviewed research articles that contributed to the body of knowledge in their field, improved their knowledge of obstetrics.

• **Run-on sentences and comma splices:** two or more independent clauses that are connected incorrectly

Example: I love to write papers I would write one every day if I had the time.

There are two complete sentences in the above example:

Sentence 1: I love to write papers.

Sentence 2: I would write one every day if I had the time.

One common type of run-on sentence is a *comma splice*. A comma splice occurs when two [independent clauses](https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/grammar/sentencestructure#s-lg-box-9131419) are joined with just a comma.

*Example of a comma splice:* Participants could leave the study at any time, they needed to indicate their preference.

Sentence 1: Participants could leave the study at any time.

Sentence 2: They needed to indicate their preference.

Some comma splices occur when a writer attempts to use a transitional expression in the middle of a sentence.

*Example of a comma splice:* The results of the study were inconclusive, therefore more research needs to be done on the topic.

Sentence 1: The results of the study were inconclusive

Transitional expression (conjunctive adverb): therefore

Sentence 2: More research needs to be done on the topic

To fix this type of comma splice, use a semicolon before the transitional expression and add a comma after it. See more examples of this on the [semicolon](https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/punctuation/semicolons) page.

*Revision:* The results of the study were inconclusive; therefore, more research needs to be done on the topic.

You can correct a run-on sentence by connecting or separating its parts correctly. There are several easy ways to connect independent clauses.

* **Lack of subject-verb agreement:** incorrect use of verb forms in relation to their subjects The **majority**rules most of the time.

**Example**. A **virus** in all the company’s computers is a real threat to security.

**• Nonstandard verb forms and inconsistent verb tense:** verb forms that are not accepted as standard usage; shifts in verb tense that cause confusion or ambiguity

EXAMPLE. Elizabeth Peabody was born in a school and thereafter felt destined to be a teacher. Her mother was a teacher and trains her daughters at her side. The academic life seems to suit Elizabeth, who thrived on the rigorous curriculum.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Correct: | Elizabeth Peabody was born in a school and thereafter felt destined to be a teacher. Her mother was a teacher and trained her daughters at her side. The academic life seemed to suit Elizabeth, who thrived on the rigorous curriculum. |

All of the action in the passage above occurred in the past, so all of the verbs there should be in the past tense.

• **Faulty pronoun case and reference**: incorrect use of subject and object pronouns or unclear pronoun reference I love going to the beach because the sound of the ocean helps me relax. Pronoun Reference: Because a pronoun can replace thousands of nouns, writers must be very careful.

 I love going to the beach because the sound of the ocean helps you relax.

(Incorrect) (How do you know your reader can relax?)

I love going to the beach because the sound of the ocean helps me relax.