

eade

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF WRITING: Effective sentences

PARTS OF SPEECH

In your notebook, write definitions for the following and give examples.

noun, countable noun, uncountable noun, verb, action verb, state verb, adjective, adverb, subject, object, definite article, indefinite article

SENTENCES

A sentence must contain a subject and a verb.

Identify the correct subjects and verbs. Circle the subjects and underline the verbs. Are they always in the same position?

1. He depends on her in times of need.
2. Watch your step.
3. Some voted in favour of the motion, others against.
4. On the battleground, lay the wounded soldier.
5. The reporter asked how the president voted.
6. How did the president vote?
7. Had she known about the problem, she would not have come.
8. Only by working effectively can you hope to succeed.

A sentence must begin with a **capital letter**, end with a **full stop, question mark or exclamation point**, and express a **complete idea**.

Which of the following are sentences? Explain.

1. The river runs through the forest.
2. Because I like it.
3. I think.
4. For example, my university.
5. I enjoy.
6. I enjoy learning new things.
7. After a long winter, when the snow begins to melt and the first blossoms begin to appear.
8. The longest river in the world.
9. The government has decided to reduce taxes, in spite of the lack of funds.
10. Engineers, who have an aptitude for drafting and mechanics.

CLAUSES

A **clause** is a group of words containing at least **one subject** and **one verb**. Clauses are used to form sentences.

There are **two types** of clauses:

- 1) **Independent clause:** subject + verb expressing a complete thought
e.g. The cost of living is rising.
- 2) **Dependent clause:** begins with a subordinator (when, while, if, that, who etc) not a complete thought, needs an independent clause
e.g. Although the price of oil has decreased.

What kind of clauses are these?

1. she is the prime minister
2. because global warming is an issue
3. whose task it is to fight crime
4. though it is crucial
5. when it was first created
6. the climate is changing

SENTENCE TYPES

There are four types of sentences:

- 1) **simple sentences:** one independent clause
e.g. The economy is getting worse.
- 2) **compound sentences:** two independent clauses joined by a coordinator
e.g. The economy is getting worse, and unemployment is rising.
- 3) **complex sentences:** a dependent and an independent clause
e.g. Although the price of oil has decreased, the cost of living is rising.
e.g., The company has had to downsize because of the economic crisis.
- 4) **compound-complex sentences:** combination of two or more independent clause and one or more dependent clauses.
e.g. After I got my degree, I had planned to take a year out to travel, but I had to go to work immediately.

What kind of sentence are these?

- 1. The writer's style is effective, and the characters come to life.
- 2. The number of readers increased last year.
- 3. Although social networks are popular, we should be careful about what sort of information we post on them, and avoid including compromising photographs.
- 4. Although social networks are popular, we should be careful about what sort of information we post on them.

Underline the dependent clause in the following.

- 1. When students from other countries come to the US, they often suffer from culture shock.
- 2. Many students are having financial problems because the cost of education has risen.
- 3. Albert Einstein, who is recognized as the a genius, was a high school dropout.
- 4. That professor who you should see is the chair of the English department.
- 5. Because people are no longer satisfied, there has been a great deal of protest.
- 6. Last year, the government reported that drug use is increasing.

Now write your own examples of the four types of sentences about the following topic: **the importance of a university degree today**

- 1.
.....
- 2.
.....
- 3.
.....
- 4.
.....

PRACTICE 1
Independent and
Dependent
Clauses

Remember that an independent clause by itself is a complete sentence, but a dependent clause by itself is an incomplete sentence. Write *Indep.* next to the complete sentences and put a period (.) after them. Write *Dep.* next to the incomplete sentences. The first two have been done for you as examples.

- Indep. 1. Globalization means more travel for businessmen and women.
- Dep. 2. As business executives fly around the globe to sell their companies' products and services
- _____ 3. Jet lag affects most long-distance travelers
- _____ 4. Which is simply the urge to sleep at inappropriate times
- _____ 5. During long journeys through several time zones, the body's inner clock is disrupted
- _____ 6. For some reason, travel from west to east causes greater jet lag than travel from east to west

- _____ 7. Also, changes in work schedules can cause jet lag
- _____ 8. When hospital nurses change from a day shift to a night shift, for example
- _____ 9. Although there is no sure way to prevent jet lag
- _____ 10. There are some ways to minimize it
- _____ 11. Because jet lag is caused at least partially by loss of sleep, not just a change in the time of sleep
- _____ 12. A traveler should plan to arrive at his or her destination as late as possible
- _____ 13. Upon arriving, he or she should immediately go to bed
- _____ 14. Then the traveler should start to live in the new time zone immediately
- _____ 15. Even when the traveler arrives early in the morning and cannot go to bed immediately

Subordinating expressions are needed to form complex sentences. Here are the most commonly used subordinators. Study them carefully and be sure you know their meaning. Look in the dictionary if you're not sure.

After	Although	As, just as	As if, as though
As soon as, as long as	Because	Before	Even though
How	If	Since	So that
Unless	Until	When	Whenever
Where	Wherever	Whether	Which
While	Who		

Exercise.

- 1) Underline the dependent clause in each sentence. One sentence has two.
- 2) Circle the subordinator.

Sub.

1. Because the cost of education is rising, many students must work part-time.
2. When students from other countries come to the United States, they often suffer from culture shock.
3. Because financial aid is difficult to obtain, many students have to work part-time.
4. Please tell me where the student union is.
5. Engineers, who have an aptitude for drafting and mechanics, must also be artistic and imaginative.
6. While the contractor follows the blueprint, the engineer checks the construction in progress.
7. Since the blueprint presents the details of the engineer's plans, it must be interpreted accurately by the contractor.
8. Students should declare a major by their junior year unless they have not made up their minds.
9. Even though students declare a major now, they can change it later.
10. The government says that inflation is holding steady.
11. Economists are concerned that the rate of inflation will double if the government does not take immediate steps to control it.

- B. Step 1** Add a logical independent clause to each of the dependent clauses.
Step 2 Punctuate each sentence correctly.

The first one has been done for you as an example.

1. I cannot register for classes _____ until I pay my tuition.
2. Unless I take 12 units each term _____.
3. _____ that computer engineering is a popular major.
4. _____ who taught this course last term?
5. Because I had to look for a part-time job _____.
6. _____ if I want to get to school on time.
7. _____ whether I should take advanced calculus.
8. _____ whom I met at the math club meeting last week.
9. When I left my country _____.
10. _____ that my college adviser recommends.

Now that you know the basic kinds of sentences, you can develop a good writing style. Overuse of the same type of sentence, whether it be simple or complex, leads to boring writing. Look at the following example. What problems do you spot. How can it be improved?

Rosa Parks

1 Rosa Parks is a famous African-American woman, **and** she is often called “the mother of the civil rights movement.” She was born into a poor but hardworking African-American family in Alabama, **and** no one suspected that she would become the spark that ignited the civil rights movement in the United States. This movement changed U.S. society forever, **and** it helped African-Americans attain equal rights under the law.

2 Parks became famous quite by accident. One day in 1955, she was on her way home from her job in a Montgomery, Alabama, department store. She boarded a city bus with three other African-Americans. They sat in the fifth row. The fifth row was the first row African-Americans were allowed to sit in. A few stops later, the front four rows filled up. A white man was left standing.

3 According to the laws of that time, African-Americans had to give up their seats to whites, so the bus driver asked Parks and the three other African-Americans to get up and move. Although the others complied, Parks refused. She later said she was not tired from work, but tired of being treated like a second-class citizen. The bus driver called the police, who arrested Parks and took her away in handcuffs.

4 Over the weekend, a protest was organized, **and** on the following Monday, African-American people in Montgomery began a boycott of the public buses, **and** the boycott was tremendously successful, **and** it lasted more than a year. The Supreme Court of the United States finally ruled that segregation on public transportation was unconstitutional. African-Americans had won a huge victory, **and** they realized their power to change the system.

Now read the same essay with the sentence structure revised.