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What are the different types of sentence structures

The Mastering the Mechanics webinar series also describes required sentence elements and varying sentence types. Please see these archived webinars for more information. Key: Yellow, bold = subject; green underline = verb, blue, italics = object, pink, regular font = prepositional phrase Independent clause: An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence. It contains a subject and a verb and is a complete idea. I like spaghetti. He reads many books. Dependent clause: A dependent clause is not a complete sentence. It must be attached to an independent clause to become complete. This is also known as a subordinate clause. Although I like spaghetti,... Because he reads many books,... Subject: A person, animal, place, thing, or concept that does an action. Determine the subject in a sentence by asking the question "Who or what?" I like spaghetti. He reads many books. Verb: Expresses what the person, animal, place, thing, or concept does. Determine the verb in a sentence by asking the question "What was the action or what happened?" I like spaghetti. He reads many books. The movie is good. (The be verb is also sometimes referred to as a copula or a linking verb. It links the subject, in this case "the movie," to the complement or the predicate of the sentence, in this case, "good.") Object: A person, animal, place, thing, or concept that receives the action. Determine the object in a sentence by asking the question "The subject did what?" or "To whom?/For whom?" I like spaghetti. He reads many books. Prepositional Phrase: A phrase that begins with a preposition (i.e., in, at, for, behind, until, after, of, during) and modifies a word in the sentence. A prepositional phrase answers one of many questions. Here are a few examples: "Where? When? In what way?" I like spaghetti for dinner. He reads many books in the library. One of the trickiest patterns to spot is that of repetitive sentence type. Just like subject and length, overusing a sentence type can hinder a reader's engagement with a text. There are four types of sentences: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. Each sentence is defined by the use of independent and dependent clauses, conjunctions, and subordinators. Simple sentences: A simple sentence is an independent clause with no conjunction or dependent clause. Compound sentences: A compound sentence is two independent clauses joined by a conjunction (e.g., and, but, or, for, nor, yet, so). Complex sentences: A complex sentence contains one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. The clauses in a complex sentence are combined with conjunctions and subordinators, terms that help the dependent clauses relate to the independent clause. Subordinators can refer to the subject (who, which), the sequence/time (since, while), or the causal elements (because, if) of the independent clause. Compound-complex sentences: A compound-complex sentence contains multiple independent clauses and at least one dependent clause. These sentences will contain both conjunctions and subordinators. Understanding sentence type will help writers note areas that should be varied through the use of clauses, conjunctions, and subordinators. In her article, Author (Year) noted that the participants did not see a change in symptoms after the treatment. Even during the treatment, Author observed no change in the statements from the participants regarding their symptoms. Based on these findings, I will not use this article for my final project. Because my project will rely on articles that note symptom improvement, Author's work is not applicable. Notice how the writer relies solely on complex sentences in this paragraph, even placing dependent clauses at the beginning of each sentence. Here is an example of merely adjusting the placement of these dependent clauses but not the sentence type: In her article, Author (Year) noted that the participants did not see a change in symptoms after the treatment. Author observed, even during treatment, no change in the statements from the participants regarding their symptoms. I will not use this article for my final project based on these findings. Because my project will rely on articles that note symptom improvement, Author's work is not applicable. While this change in the placement of dependent clauses does avoid a repetitive rhythm to the paragraph, try combining sentences or using conjunctions to create compound or compound-complex sentences to vary sentence type: In her article, Author (Year) noted that the participants did not see a change in symptoms after the treatment. Author observed, even during treatment, no change in the statements from the participants regarding their symptoms, and based on these findings, I will not use this article for my final project. Because my project will rely on articles that note symptom improvement, Author's work is not applicable. Making these slight adjustments to sentence type helps the reader engage with the narrative rather than focus on the structure of the text. Adjusting your sentence type during a final revision is a great way to create effective prose for any scholarly document. A sentence's "structure" is the way its words are arranged.In English, we have four main sentence structures: the simple sentence, the compound sentence, the complex sentence, and the compound-complex sentence. Each uses a specific combination of independent and dependent clauses to help make sure that our sentences are strong, informational, and most importantly, that they make sense!2. Examples of Sentence StructuresIn the examples, independent clauses are green, dependent clauses are purple, and conjunctions are orange. Here are examples of each type of sentence:The dog ran. Simple SentenceThe dog ran and he ate popcorn. Compound sentenceAfter the dog ran, he ate popcorn. Complex sentenceAfter the dog ran, he ate popcorn and he drank a big soda. Compound-complex sentence3. Parts of Sentence StructuresAll forms of sentence structures have clauses (independent, dependent, or both), and some also have conjunctions to help join two or more clauses or whole sentences.a. Independent ClauseIndependent clauses are key parts of every sentence structure. An independent clause has a subject and a predicate and makes sense on its own as a complete sentence. Here are a few:The dog ate brownies.The dog jumped high.She ate waffles.He went to the library.So, you can see that all of the clauses above are working sentences. What's more, all sentences have an independent clause!b. Dependent (Subordinate) ClauseA dependent clause is a major part of three of the four sentence structures (compound, complex, and compound-complex). It has a subject and a predicate; BUT, it can't be a sentence. It provides extra details about the independent clause, and it doesn't make sense on its own, like these:After he went to the partyThough he ate hotdogsWhile he was at the danceIf the dog eats chocolateEach of the bullets above leaves an unanswered question. By itself, a dependent clause is just a fragment sentence (an incomplete sentence). So, it needs to be combined with an independent clause to be a sentence.c. ConjunctionA conjunction is a word in a sentence that connects other words, phrases and clauses. Conjunctions are a big part of compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. The most common conjunction that you know is "and." Others are for, but, or, yet, and so. Conjunctions are important because they let us combine information, but still keep ideas separate so that they are easy to understand.Here are two sentences, with and without conjunctions:Incorrect: The girl ran to the ice cream truck then she ate ice cream.Correct: The girl ran to the ice cream truck, and then she ate ice cream. So, you can see that we need a conjunction for the sentence to be clear!It is important to know that the word "then" is NOT a conjunction—it's an adverb!4. Types of Sentence StructuresAs mentioned, there are four main types of sentence structures: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. To begin, here is a simple chart that outlines the patterns of each type.a. Simple sentenceA simple sentence has only one subject and one predicate—one independent clause. In fact, an independent clause itself is a simple sentence. Here are some examples:She jumped.The cheetah ran.He ran to the gas station.He ate dinner.Simple sentences don't have many details and they don't really combine multiple ideas—they are simple!b. Compound sentenceA compound sentence has at least two independent clauses. It uses a conjunction like "and" to connect the ideas. Here are some examples:The dog ate pizza but the cat drank apple juice. The dog ate pizza but the cat drank apple juice and the fish had eggs.As you can see, a compound sentence allows us to share a lot of information by combining two or more complete thoughts into one sentence.c. Complex sentenceA complex sentence has one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. It sometimes uses conjunctions and other words to combine all of the clauses together.When he was on the airplane, the man bought cookies. When he was on the airplane, the man bought cookies, but not brownies.A great way to make a sentence more detailed is by adding dependent clauses (which couldn't be sentences on their own). So, complex sentences let us add information to simple sentences.d. Compound-complex sentenceA compound-complex sentence has two or more independent clauses and at least one dependent clause—so, it uses conjunction(s) to combine two complete sentences and at least one incomplete sentence. Here is an example:The girl smelled cookies, which were baking at home, so, she ran all the way there.The result of combining the three clauses and the conjunction is a compound-complex sentence that is both informational and easy to understand. The independent clauses give the main information, and the dependent clause(s) give the details.5. How to Avoid MistakesWhen it comes to making sure your sentence is clear and complete, having the right sentence structure is very important. A couple of common mistakes can happen when you forget how to use clauses or conjunctions in the right way, like run-on sentences and fragment sentences.a. Run-on sentencesIn simple terms, a run-on sentence is a sentence that is too long. For instance, if a writer forgets to use conjunctions, a sentence seems like it "runs on" for too long. For example:The fox really liked pancakes, he ate them every day for breakfast, he couldn't eat them without syrup and butter. But, with the right conjunctions, this can be a normal compound sentence:The fox really liked pancakes, so, he ate them every day for breakfast; but, he couldn't eat them without syrup and butter.As you can see, the new sentence is much easier to read and makes more sense.b. Fragment (incomplete) sentencesA "fragment" is a small piece of something. So, a fragment sentence is just a piece of a sentence: it is missing a subject, a predicate, or an independent clause. It's simply an incomplete sentence. Fragment sentences can happen when you forget an independent clause.For instance, by itself, a dependent clause is just a fragment. Let's use a couple of the dependent clauses from above:While he was at the dance What happened?If he eats chocolate Then what?As you can see, each leaves an unanswered question. So, let's complete them:While he was at the dance, the dog drank fruit punch.The dog will get a stomachache if he eats chocolate.Here, we completed the fragment sentences by adding independent clauses (underlined), which made them into complex sentences. There are four types of English sentence structure. Once you master these four types of English sentence structures, you will find writing easier and enjoyable. Types of English Sentence Structure There are different ways to categorize sentences. However, for ease of learning, sentence structure is most helpful. There are four types of sentence structure. They are simple, compound, complex and compound-complex. By the way, a sentence is a group of words that expresses one complete thought. That is, a sentence must have a subject and a verb. If a group of words does not convey one complete thought, then you have a sentence fragment. Furthermore, if a group of words is not joined together correctly, then you have a run-on sentence. English Sentence Structure 1. Simple Sentences A simple sentence has one independent clause or main clause. It has no dependent clauses or subordinate clauses. However, a simple sentence may have a compound subject or a compound verb or it may have both a compound subject and verb. Also it can have modifiers like an adverb or adjective or adverb phrase or adjective phrase. The house caught fire. (single subject and verb) The old house caught fire. (old modifies house) The house and barn caught fire and burned down. (compound subject and verb) The house and barn caught fire and burned down quickly. (quickly modifies down) 2. Compound Sentences A compound sentence is made up of two or more independent clauses joined by conjunctions or punctuation. A compound sentence does not have a dependent clause. The house caught fire, and the fire brigade extinguished the fire. The coordinating conjunctions are: for, and, nor, but, or, yet and so. The house caught fire; the fire brigade extinguished the fire. The semi-colon joins these two independent clauses together. 3. Complex Sentences A complex sentence contains one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. An independent clause has one complete thought; whereas, a dependent clause has an incomplete thought. For example, a dependent clause could be like this: When we returned from the football game.... This group of words is an incomplete thought. In other words, we are looking for more information to understand what it wants to say. When we returned from the football game, the house caught fire and burned down. Dependent or subordinate clauses can be noun clauses, adjective clauses or adverb clauses. 4. Compound-complex Sentences A compound-complete sentence is made up of two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. When we arrived home, the house caught fire, and we quickly called the fire brigade on the mobile. The house caught fire, and the fire brigade put the fire out before it caused any damage. Types of English Sentence Structure Resources English Grammar in Use by Raymond Murphy Plain English Handbook by J. Martyn Walsh and Anna Kathleen Walsh The Only Grammar Book by Susan Thurman Mastering English Grammar by S.H. Burton

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