



There are four kinds of basic sentences in English: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. The terms may be new to you, but if you can recognize subjects and verbs, with a little instruction and practice you should be able to identify and write any of the four kinds of sentences. The only new idea to master is the concept of the *clause*.

Clauses

A clause is a group of words with a subject and a verb that functions as a part or all of a complete sentence. There are two kinds of clauses: independent (main) and dependent (subordinate).

Independent Clause: I have the money.

Dependent Clause: When I have the money

Independent Clauses

An independent (main) clause is a group of words with a subject and a verb that can stand alone and make sense. An independent clause expresses a complete thought by itself and can be written as a separate sentence.

Sabrina plays the bass guitar.

The manager is not at fault.

Dependent Clauses

A dependent clause is a group of words with a subject and a verb that depends on the main clause to give it meaning.

since Carlotta came home [no meaning alone]

Since Carlotta came home, her mother has been happy. [has meaning]
dependent clause independent clause

because she was needed [no meaning alone]

Kachina stayed in the game because she was needed. [has meaning]
independent clause dependent clause

Relative Clauses

One type of dependent clause is called a relative clause. A relative clause begins with a relative pronoun, a pronoun such as *that*, *which*, or *who*. Relative pronouns relate the clause to another word in the sentence.

that fell last night [no meaning alone]

The snow that fell last night is nearly gone. [has meaning]
dependent clause

independent clause

In the sentence above, the relative pronoun *that* relates the dependent clause to the subject of the sentence, *snow*.

who stayed in the game [no meaning alone]

Kachina was the only one who stayed in the game.
independent clause dependent clause

In the sentence above, the relative pronoun *who* relates the dependent clause to the word *one*.

Trouble Spot: Phrases

A **phrase** is a group of words that go together. It differs from a clause in that a phrase does not have a subject and a verb. In Chapter 2, we discussed prepositional phrases (*in the house, beyond the horizon*) and saw some verbal phrases (infinitive phrase: *to go home*; participial phrase: *disconnected from the printer*; and gerund phrase: *running the computer*).

EXERCISE 1

Identifying Clauses and Phrases

Identify the following groups of words as an independent, or main, clause (has a subject and verb and can stand alone); a dependent clause (has a subject and verb but cannot stand alone); or a phrase (a group of words that go together but do not have a subject and verb). Use these abbreviations: IC (independent clause), DC (dependent clause), or P (phrase).

- _____ 1. Under the table
- _____ 2. After I scanned the document
- _____ 3. I scanned the document.
- _____ 4. To find a fossil
- _____ 5. Mr. Darwin found a fossil.
- _____ 6. Over the bridge and through the woods
- _____ 7. We chased the wind over the bridge and through the woods.
- _____ 8. Which is on the floor
- _____ 9. Find your new socks.
- _____ 10. Because of the new guidelines
- _____ 11. Standing on the corner
- _____ 12. Why are we standing on the corner?

Writing Sentences

This section covers sentence types according to this principle: On the basis of the number and kinds of clauses it contains, a sentence may be classified as simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex. In the examples in the following table, the dependent clauses are italicized, and the independent clauses are underlined.

| Type | Definition | Example |
|------------------|---|---|
| Simple | One independent clause | <u>She did the work well.</u> |
| Compound | Two or more independent clauses | <u>She did the work well</u> , and <u>she was paid well.</u> |
| Complex | One independent clause and one or more dependent clauses | <i>Because she did the work well</i> , <u>she was paid well.</u> |
| Compound-Complex | Two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses | <i>Because she did the work well</i> , <u>she was paid well</u> , and <u>she was satisfied.</u> |

Simple Sentences

A **simple sentence** consists of one independent clause and no dependent clauses. It may contain phrases and have more than one subject or verb.

The *lake looks* beautiful in the moonlight. [one subject and one verb]

The *Army, Navy, and Marines sent* troops to the disaster area. [three subjects and one verb]

We *sang* the old songs and *danced* happily at their wedding. [one subject and two verbs]

My *father, mother, and sister came* to the school play, *applauded* the performers, and *attended* the party afterwards. [three subjects and three verbs]

EXERCISE 2

Writing Simple Sentences

Write six simple sentences. The first five have been started for you.

1. This school _____

2. My desk _____

3. My friend _____

4. In the evening, I _____

5. Last night the _____

6. _____

Compound Sentences

A **compound sentence** consists of two or more independent clauses with no dependent clauses. Take, for example, the following two independent clauses:

He opened the drawer. He found his missing disk.

Here are two ways to join the independent clauses to form a compound sentence.

1. The two independent clauses can be connected by a connecting word called a *coordinating conjunction*. The coordinating conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*. (An easy way to remember them is to think of the acronym FANBOYS, which is made up of the first letter of each conjunction.) Use a comma before the coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) between two independent clauses (unless the clauses are extremely short).

He opened the drawer, *and* he found his missing disk.

He opened the drawer, *so* he found his missing disk.

2. Another way to join independent clauses to form a compound sentence is to put a semicolon between the clauses.

He opened the drawer; he found his missing disk.

EXERCISE 3

Writing Compound Sentences

Write five compound sentences using coordinating conjunctions. The sentences have been started for you. Then write the same five compound sentences without the coordinating conjunctions. Use a semicolon to join the independent clauses.

1. He played well in the first quarter, but he _____

2. She was happy for a while, and then _____

3. The dog is our best friend, for _____

4. She is not the best player, nor is _____

5. I will try to help, but _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Complex Sentences

A **complex sentence** consists of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. In the following sentences, the dependent clauses are italicized.

When lilacs are in bloom, we love to visit friends in the country. [one dependent clause and one independent clause]

Although it rained last night, we decided to take the path *that led through the woods*. [one independent clause and two dependent clauses]

Punctuation tip: Use a comma after a dependent clause that appears before the main clause.

When the bus arrived, we quickly boarded.

A relative clause (see page 47) can be the dependent clause in a complex sentence.

I knew the actress *who played that part in the 1980s*.

EXERCISE 4

Writing Complex Sentences

Write six complex sentences. The first five have been started for you.

1. Although he did the work quickly, _____

2. _____
because we got caught in a storm. _____
3. After you go to the party, _____

4. Because you are smart, _____

5. _____
_____ when he turned to leave.
6. _____

Compound-Complex Sentences

A compound-complex sentence consists of two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses.

Compound-Complex Sentence: Albert enlisted in the Army, and Robert, who was his older brother, joined him a day later.

Independent Clauses: Albert enlisted in the Army
Robert joined him a day later

Dependent Clause: who was his older brother

Compound-Complex Sentence: Because Mr. Yamamoto was a talented teacher, he was voted teacher of the year, and his students prospered.

Independent Clauses: he was voted teacher of the year
his students prospered

Dependent Clause: Because Mr. Yamamoto was a talented teacher

Writing Compound-Complex Sentences

1. Because he was my friend, I had to defend him, and I _____

2. Although he started late, he finished rapidly, and he _____

3. She had not eaten since the clock struck twelve, and she _____

4. The man who was sick tried to rise, but _____

5. If you want to leave, _____

6. _____

Here is a systematic approach some students find helpful.

Underline all the verbs and circle all the subjects in the sentence.

Draw a box around each clause.

Label each box as either IC (independent clause) or DC (dependent clause).

Add up the number of each kind of clause and apply the following formula. (See the chart on page 49 for a more detailed explanation and examples.)

One IC = Simple

Two or more ICs = Compound

One IC and one or more DCs = Complex

Two or more ICs and one or more DCs = Compound-Complex

DC

Although he played well all season,

IC

his team lost ten games and finished in last place.

1 DC + 1 IC = Complex

EXERCISE 6

Identifying Types of Sentences

Indicate the kind of sentence by writing the appropriate letter(s) in the blank.

- S simple
CP compound
CX complex
CC compound-complex

Underline the verbs and circle the subjects. Consider using labeled boxes as shown above. (See Answer Key for answers.)

- _____ 1. The most popular sport in the world is soccer.
- _____ 2. People in ancient China and Japan had a form of soccer, and even Rome had a game that resembled soccer.
- _____ 3. The game as it is played today got its start in England.
- _____ 4. In the Middle Ages, whole towns played soccer on Shrove Tuesday.
- _____ 5. Goals were built at opposite ends of town, and hundreds of people who lived in those towns would play on each side.
- _____ 6. Such games resembled full-scale brawls.
- _____ 7. The first side to score a goal won and was declared village champion.
- _____ 8. Then both sides tended to the wounded, and they didn't play again for a whole year.
- _____ 9. The rules of the game were written in the late 1800s at British boarding schools.
- _____ 10. Now nearly every European country has a national soccer team, and the teams participate in international tournaments.