

Sentence Structures

There are many types of sentence structures. Some of the more common ones are the simple sentence, the compound sentence, and the complex sentence.

The Simple Sentence

A **simple sentence** has only one subject-verb combination and expresses a complete thought.

An owl hooted.

A simple sentence may have more than one subject.

Lemons and limes taste sharp and tangy.

A simple sentence may have more than one verb.

The puppies nipped and nuzzled one another playfully.

A simple sentence may even have several subjects and verbs:

Every New Year's Eve my parents, aunts, and uncles eat, dance, and welcome the New Year together.

The Compound Sentence

A **compound sentence** is made up of two or more complete thoughts. For instance, look at the following simple sentences:

Supper is ready.

The guests have not arrived.

These two simple sentences can be combined to form one compound sentence:

Supper is ready, **but** the guests have not arrived.

The process of joining two ideas of equal importance is known as **coordination**. Put a *comma plus an adjoining word* (**coordinating conjunction**, sometimes referred to as FANBOYS).

For
And
Nor
But
Or
Yet
So

The Complex Sentence

A **complex sentence** includes one independent statement and at least one *dependent statement*, which cannot stand alone.

If it thunders, our dog hides under the bed.

Our dog hides under the bed is a complete sentence; it can stand alone.

If it thunders is dependent, and cannot stand alone. This is also called a fragment.

The Sentence Fragment

A **fragment** is a **phrase** or **dependent clause**. It is an incomplete sentence because it lacks a subject or a verb (which makes it a phrase) or does not express a complete thought (as in a depending clause).

Phrase: An accomplished and well-respected cook. (This phrase contains a subject, the cook, but no verb).

Clauses are different from phrases because clauses contain both a subject and a verb. A **dependent clause** is an **independent clause** that contains a **subordinating conjunction**. *For more examples of subordinating conjunctions, see handout "Useful Ways to Join Ideas."*

Dependent

Clause: While I eat.

The Run-On Sentence

There are two types of run-ons: **fused sentences** and **comma splices**.

When there is no punctuation at all separating two complete statements, it is a **fused sentence**.

Computer skills are useful in college they will help you in the job market as well.

When a comma alone separates two complete thoughts, the result is called a **comma splice**.

Computer skills are useful in college, they will help you in the job market as well.

Here are some common ways to fix fused sentences and comma splices:

1. Use a period. Form two independent sentences.
2. Use a semicolon; separate the clauses.
3. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction, and connect the two ideas.
4. If one idea is of greater importance, express the lesser idea as a dependent clause.