

Additional information about sentences (page 1)

In English there are three types of sentences:
simple, compound and complex.

Simple Sentences

A *simple sentence* has one subject and one verb (or verb phrase).

The girl ran.
subject verb

This is also a *clause*.

Other information can be added to this *simple sentence* (or *clause*), but as long as there is only one verb, it is still a *simple sentence*.

The girl ran to the tree house.
subject verb adverbial phrase (where)

One morning the girl ran to the tree house.
adverb: (when)

One morning the girl ran excitedly to the tree house.
adverb: (how)

One morning the adventurous girl ran excitedly to the tree house.
Adjective- describes the noun

In this example, adverbs and an adjective have been added to the clause, but there is still only one verb (ran). This is therefore still a simple sentence.

If another clause is added, it becomes either a *compound* or a *complex* sentence.

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Compound Sentences

When another clause is added, a conjunction is needed to join the two clauses together. It is not correct to just put a comma between two clauses.

~~The girl ran, she went to her tree house.~~

This is called a run-on sentence. A good test is: *could it be a full stop? If it could be a full stop – it should be a full stop.*

The type of conjunction authors choose will determine the type of sentence created (compound or complex).

Here are some *coordinating* conjunctions that create *compound sentences*:

for
and
nor
but
or
yet
so

(The most common conjunctions are: *and, but, or, so*)

A useful acronym to remember these coordinating conjunctions is: **FANBOYS**

In formal writing, these conjunctions are not used at the beginning of a sentence.

Often when joining two clauses with a *coordinating conjunction*, the subject in the second clause is dropped (drop the comma if you drop the subject):

The girl ran to the tree house, and *she* climbed the ladder.

The girl ran to the tree house and climbed the ladder.

(no subject – no comma)

When first introducing *compound sentences*, ask the students to join only two clauses with a *coordinating conjunction*. As they become fluent writers, they will gain more control and will be able to make informed decisions about how they wish to join their sentences.

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Complex Sentences

A **complex** sentence has one independent clause (main clause) and one or more dependent clauses (subordinate clauses). The dependent clause does not make sense on its own and needs to be joined to the main clause.

The girl ran to the tree house (independent clause – this makes sense on its own)
so that she could meet her friend (dependent clause – this does not make sense on its own)
The girl ran to the tree house **so that she could meet her friend**.

The second clause is dependent because it starts with a conjunction; 'so that'.

These conjunctions are called *subordinating conjunctions* because when they are at the beginning of a clause they create a 'subordinate' or dependent clause.

These conjunctions are easy to use and very powerful in writing. They create a 'cause and effect' relationship, which adds to the depth of the message in the writing.

The girl ran to the tree house **so that** she could meet her friend.
'So that' creates a 'why' relationship and explains 'why' the girl ran to the tree house.

Common subordinating conjunctions

Why	Time	How	Where	On what condition
because as so that since	while when as before after since until as soon as whenever	as if as though	where wherever	if as long as in order to in case although unless even though

These conjunctions are on Step 4 of the Sentence starter ladder (CD3)

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In many cases, you can reverse the order of a *complex sentence* and begin the sentence with the dependent clause (the clause that begins with a conjunction). This is an easy way for students to vary their sentence beginnings.

The girl ran to the tree house *while* munching on her sandwich.
While munching on her sandwich, the girl ran to the tree house.

Punctuation rule

If you begin with the dependent clause (the one that starts with the conjunction), put a comma after the first clause.

There are two other main types of dependent clauses, which will create complex sentences.

1: Inserting a dependent clause in the middle of the independent clause, to tell the reader more about the subject.

This *dependent clause* begins with a pronoun: *who* (people), *whom* (people), *which* (animals or things), *that* (either), and has a verb.

Dependent clause (in blue), telling us more about the subject; begins with a pronoun; 'was' is the verb.

The girl, *who was only five*, ran to the tree house.

Main clause (in black) – split by the dependent clause

Dependent clause (in blue), telling us more about the subject; begins with a pronoun; 'stood' is the verb.

The willow, *which stood at the top of the garden*, was swaying in the gentle breeze.

Main clause (in black) – split by the dependent clause

The independent clauses: 'The girl ran to the tree house.' 'The willow was swaying in the gentle breeze.' have been split, and a dependent clause has been added to tell the reader more about the subject (the girl and the willow).

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Note: If the extra information added to the main clause does not include a verb, it is not a complex sentence:

The willow, *tall and strong*, was swaying in the gentle breeze.
No verb

Punctuation rule

If you split your main clause, put commas before and after the added clause.

2: Beginning the clause with an 'ed' or 'ing' verb

(grammatical name: non-finite clauses)

Stumbling into the classroom, Tama spotted the culprit.

Dependent clause

Independent clause – makes sense

(does not make sense on its own)

Exasperated by her friend, Lea stormed out of the library.

Dependent clause

Independent clause – makes sense

(does not make sense on its own)

This follows the same punctuation rule as the 'conjunction' complex sentence.

Punctuation rule

If you begin with the dependent clause (the one that starts with an 'ed' or 'ing' verb), put a comma after the first clause.

Once again, these complex sentences vary sentence beginnings and create cause and effect relationships.

This dependent clause can usually be added to the independent clause after the subject (splitting the main clause).

Tama, *stumbling into the classroom*, spotted the culprit.

Lea, *exasperated by her friends*, stormed out of the library.

Punctuation rule

If you split your main clause, put commas before and after the added clause.

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Different types of sentences

Sentences can be:

Statements	Questions	Exclamations	Commands	Direct speech
The girl ran to the tree house.	Are you coming to the party?	It was filthy!	Cut the paper diagonally.	'I don't like maths,' announced Sophie.
Lea stormed out of the library.	Have you ever wonder why bats sleep all day?	I am shocked!	Keep calm!	'What have I done?' she murmured to herself.
It was steaming hot.	Do you think I am crazy? (rhetorical)	It's amazing!		
		I can't believe it!		