Sentence types

Different types of sentence do different jobs.

Statements

A statement is a sentence that simply tells the reader something.
The dog is dirty.



You can use an exclamation mark **(!)** to show when your sentence is saying something surprising or with force.
That dog is absolutely filthy!



Questions

Use a question mark **(?)** at the end of a sentence to show that you are asking a question.

Why haven't you bathed the dog?

Commands

A command is when you are telling someone to do something. Commands usually start with a **verb** (a doing word). You should use commands when you are writing instructions telling someone how to do something.



1. Fill the bath with warm water.

2. Give the dog a bath.

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SIMPLE SENTENCE

A simple sentence, also called an independent clause, contains a subject and a verb, and it expresses a complete thought. In the following simple sentences, subjects are in yellow, and verbs are in green.

A. Some students like to study in the mornings.
B. Juan and Arturo play football every afternoon.
C. Alicia goes to the library and studies every day.

The three examples above are all simple sentences. Note that sentence B contains a compound subject, and sentence C contains a compound verb. Simple sentences, therefore, contain a subject and verb and express a complete thought, but they can also contain a compound subjects or verbs.

COMPOUND SENTENCE

A compound sentence contains two independent clauses joined by a coordinator. The coordinators are as follows: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*. (Helpful hint: The first letter of each of the coordinators spells *FANBOYS*.) Except for very short sentences, coordinators are always preceded by a comma. In the following compound sentences, subjects are in yellow, verbs are in green, and the coordinators and the commas that precede them are in red.

A. I tried to speak Spanish, and my friend tried to speak English.
B. Alejandro played football, so Maria went shopping.
C. Alejandro played football, for Maria went shopping.

The above three sentences are compound sentences. Each sentence contains two independent clauses, and they are joined by a coordinator with a comma preceding it. Note how the conscious use of coordinators can change the relationship between the clauses. Sentences B and C, for example, are identical except for the coordinators. In sentence B, which action occurred first? Obviously, "Alejandro played football" first, and as a consequence, "Maria went shopping. In sentence C, "Maria went shopping" first. In sentence C, "Alejandro played football" because, possibly, he didn't have anything else to do, *for* or *because* "Maria went shopping." How can the use of other coordinators change the relationship between the two clauses? What implications would the use of "yet" or "but" have on the meaning of the sentence?

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COMPLEX SENTENCE

A complex sentence has an independent clause joined by one or more dependent clauses. A complex sentence always has a subordinator such as *because, since, after, although,* or *when* or a relative pronoun such as *that, who,* or *which*. In the following complex sentences, subjects are in yellow, verbs are in green, and the subordinators and their commas (when required) are in red.

A. When he handed in his homework, he forgot to give the teacher the last page.
B. The teacher returned the homework after she noticed the error.
C. The students are studying because they have a test tomorrow.
D. After they finished studying, Juan and Maria went to the movies.
E. Juan and Maria went to the movies after they finished studying.

When a complex sentence begins with a subordinator such as sentences A and D, a comma is required at the end of the dependent clause. When the independent clause begins the sentence with subordinators in the middle as in sentences B, C, and E, no comma is required. If a comma is placed before the subordinators in sentences B, C, and E, it is wrong.

Note that sentences D and E are the same except sentence D begins with the dependent clause which is followed by a comma, and sentence E begins with the independent clause which contains no comma. The comma after the dependent clause in sentence D is required, and experienced *listeners* of English will often *hear* a slight pause there. In sentence E, however, there will be no pause when the independent clause begins the sentence.

COMPLEX SENTENCES / ADJECTIVE CLAUSES

Finally, sentences containing adjective clauses (or dependent clauses) are also complex because they contain an independent clause and a dependent clause. The subjects, verbs, and subordinators are marked the same as in the previous sentences, and in these sentences, the independent clauses are also underlined.

A. The woman who called my mom sells cosmetics.
B. The book that Jonathan read is on the shelf.
C. The house which Elvis Presley was born in is still standing.
D. The town where I grew up is in the United Kingdom.

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