

## Sentence Structure

Simple → Compound → Complex

Meaning is conveyed not only by the words in a sentence, but also by the way a sentence is structured. Understanding sentence structure allows you to

- avoid errors like comma splices, run-ons, and sentence fragments,
- expand on your ideas and clarify the relationship between them, and
- add variety and develop a unique style for a more enjoyable paper.

There are many aspects to sentence structure, but learning how to construct and when to use simple, compound, and complex sentences is a good place to start.

### Simple Sentences

**Composition:** At its core, a simple sentence is constructed from one subject (a noun), a verb (the action), and sometimes an object (a noun affected by the action).

**Purpose:** As the first type of sentence we learn, a simple sentence is sometimes considered, well, too simple; however, punctuating a paragraph of compound and complex sentences with a single simple sentence can make an idea stand out and give it more power.

<p>[Anne's parent's] [encouraged] [her love of the ocean.]</p> <p><i>subject</i>                  <i>action</i>                  <i>object</i></p>
<p>[She] [became] [a marine biologist.]</p>



### Compound Sentences

**Composition:** Compound sentences combine two simple sentences with a comma and a coordinating conjunction, which include *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, & *so* (FANBOYS).

**Purpose:** Compound sentences show a relationship between two ideas. In addition, both sentences in that relationship are of equal importance (coordinate).

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 5px;">Independent clause</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 5px;">,</div> <div style="font-size: 2em; margin-right: 5px;">{</div> <div style="margin-right: 5px;">for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so</div> <div style="font-size: 2em; margin-right: 5px;">}</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 5px;">independent clause</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 5px;">.</div> </div>
<p>Anne's parents encouraged her love of the ocean, so she became a marine biologist</p>



## Complex Sentences

**Composition:** Complex sentences combine two sentences with a subordinating conjunction. If the subordinating conjunction begins the sentence, you use a comma to combine the sentences. You don't use a comma if the conjunction appears between the two sentences.

**Purpose:** Complex sentences join two sentences so that one depends on the other completely (subordinate), further emphasizing the extent (and complexity) of their relationship.

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 10px;">                 After, Although, As (as if),                  Because, Before, If,                  Since, Unless, Until,                  Whereas, When, While             </div> <div style="font-size: 3em; margin-right: 10px;">}</div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 5px;">independent clause</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 5px;">,</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 5px;">independent clause</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">.</div> </div> </div>
<p>Because Anne's parents encouraged her love of the ocean, she became a marine biologist.</p>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 10px;">Independent clause</div> <div style="font-size: 3em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div style="padding: 5px; margin-right: 10px;">                 after, although, as (as if),                  because, before, if, since,                  unless, until, whereas,                  when, while             </div> <div style="font-size: 3em; margin-right: 10px;">}</div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 5px;">independent clause</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">.</div> </div> </div>
<p>Anne became a marine biologist because her parents encouraged her love of the ocean.</p>

## Next Steps

There are other ways to combine sentences and clauses to create more complexity. The next time you read a passage, pay attention to how the writer structures their sentences and try to emulate those styles in your own writing. Mimicry is an effective way to learn new techniques and eventually develop your own style.