

Clauses and Phrases

For Proper Sentence Structure



Purpose:

- Writing is the primary basis upon which your work, your learning, and your intellect will be judged—in college, in the workplace, and in the community.
- Writing is an essential job skill.
- The understanding of sentence structure is essential for communication with other people.



Definitions

A **clause** is a group of words containing a subject and a verb.

An **independent clause** is a simple sentence and can stand on its own.

- She is hungry
- I am feeling well today.

A **dependent clause** cannot stand on its own. It needs an independent clause to complete a sentence.

Dependent clauses often begin with such words as *although, since, when, because*.

- Although she is hungry...
- Whoever is hungry...
- Because I am feeling well...

Dependent	Independent
Although she is hungry,	she will give him some of her food.
Whatever they decide,	I will agree too.

A **phrase** is a group of words without a subject-verb component, used as a single part of speech.

- Best Friend (noun phrase)
- Needing help (adjective phrase)
- With the blue shirt (prepositional phrase)
- For twenty days (prepositional adverb phrase)

Sentence Type

There are four types of sentences: **simple, complex, compound, and compound-complex**. These are the four ways that independent and dependent clauses can be combined. They are used for sentence variety, which keeps the writing from being choppy and helps to keep the reader's interest.

Simple Sentence

- Contains only one independent clause.

Example:



- Hayley dropped her books.

NOTE: A simple sentence is not necessarily short or simple. It can be long and involved, with many parts and compound elements. But if there is only one independent clause, it is, nevertheless, a simple sentence. The following example has a single independent clause with a single subject (Justin) and a compound verb (gulped, swallowed, groaned, and decided).

Example:

- Justin gulped down his fourth cup of coffee, swallowed a Tylenol for his pounding headache, groaned, and decided he would have to drop his Agricultural Economics class.

Compound Sentence

- When you join two simple sentences properly, you get a compound sentence. Conversely, a compound sentence can be broken into two complete sentences, each with its own subject and its own verb. You can join simple sentences to create compound sentences with a semicolon or with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

Example:

- Homer has Basic Plant Science on Mondays and Wednesdays; Environmental Horticulture conflicted with his schedule.
- Homer has Basic Plant Science on Mondays and Wednesdays, but Environmental Horticulture conflicted with his schedule.

NOTE: If you join two simple sentences *improperly*, you do not get a compound sentence; you get a *run-on*, most likely either a comma splice or a fused sentence.

Complex Sentence

- A complex sentence is a sentence that contains both a dependent and an independent clause.

Example:

- Even though Eva took Turf Management just to fill out her schedule, she found it unexpectedly interesting.
- Eva found Turf Management unexpectedly interesting even though she took it just to fill out her schedule.

NOTE: In the example, both clauses contain a subject and a verb, but the dependent clause has, in addition, the dependent-making words *even though*. If you start the sentence with the dependent-making



words (or subordinating conjunction), place a comma between the clauses. On the other hand, if you start with the independent clause and place the dependent-making words in the middle of the sentence, do not use a comma.

Compound-complex Sentence

- A compound-complex sentence combines at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause. The punctuation rules remain the same: the two simple sentences are joined by one of the two methods described above, and the dependent clause is punctuated (or not) depending on whether it precedes or follows an independent clause.

Example:

- Homer was already in class, and Eva was in the lab while Justin was sleeping off his headache.
- While Justin was sleeping off his headache, Homer was already in class, and Eva was in the lab.
- Homer was already in class while Justin slept off his headache; Eva was in the lab.

NOTE: In the following example, the dependent-making word signaling the beginning of the dependent clause is *while*.

Sentence Purpose

- Sentences can do different things.

Declarative Sentences

- Make statements and end with periods.

Example:

- I am planning to drop Agricultural Economics.

Interrogative Sentences

- Ask questions and end with question marks.

Example:

- Have you taken any Agricultural Engineering classes?



Imperative sentences

- Give commands or make demands or requests. They usually end with a period. An imperative sentence often has as its subject an unstated "you."

Examples:

- Hand in your homework assignments, please.
- Stop. Drop. Roll.

Exclamatory Sentences

- Convey strong emotion and end with exclamation marks; use them sparingly.

Example:

- Watch out for the rattlesnake!

RESOURCES

1. The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation by Jane Straus
2. <http://www.marquette.edu/wac/WhatMakesWritingSoImportant.shtml>
3. https://www.butte.edu/departments/cas/tipsheets/grammar/sentence_type.html

