

## Basic Sentence Structure

### What is a sentence?

A basic sentence is a complete thought or idea — subject + predicate. It is also known as a simple sentence.

Subject (Noun Phrase) – One of two main parts of a sentence containing the subject noun or a pronoun—a person, place or thing— often accompanied by modifiers. Therefore, the noun or pronoun is who or what the sentence is about.

Predicate – One of two main parts of a sentence containing the verb, objects, or phrases governed by the verb.

**Subject-(NOUN) + VERB + Object-NOUN**  
**[ Predicate ]**

### Parts of a Sentence/ Sentence Building Blocks

- A phrase is a cluster of connected words that do not form a complete idea or sentence.
- A clause consists of a subject (noun/noun phrase) and a predicate (verb/verb phrase). It can either be an independent clause (simple sentence), or it can be a dependent clause that relies on an independent clause to form a complete sentence. (For more information on dependent/independent clauses, see **Sentence Expansion**.)
- A simple sentence contains a subject (noun/noun phrase) and a predicate (verb/verb phrase). It communicates one complete idea as an independent clause. It's a complete sentence.
- A compound sentence is the logical combination of two complete thoughts or independent clauses to form one sentence. It is usually linked by a coordinating conjunction or a semicolon, but subordinating conjunctions used in a complex sentence can be used as coordinators as well to form a compound sentence as it were. (For more information, see **Sentence Coordination/Subordination** under **Sentence Construction**.)
- A complex sentence includes a dependent clause linked to an independent clause by a subordinating conjunction of some kind to form a complete sentence.

### Sentence Types in Detail :

#### **Simple, Compound, Complex, and Compound-Complex**

#### **Simple Sentences**

A simple sentence contains a subject and a verb.

It expresses a single complete thought that can stand on its own.

#### **Examples:**

The baby cried for food.

There is a subject and a verb that expresses a complete thought.

Professor Malapo's smart students completed and turned in their homework.

A simple sentence does not necessarily have to be short. It can have adjectives. In this case, there are two verbs "completed" and "turned in." However, the sentence expresses one complete thought and therefore is a simple sentence.

Jane and Susan ate too much and felt sick.

Although there are two subjects and two verbs, it is still a simple sentence because both verbs share the same subjects and express one complete thought.

### **Compound Sentences**

A compound sentence has two independent clauses. An independent clause is a part of a sentence that can stand alone because it contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought.

Basically, a compound contains two simple sentences.

These independent clauses are joined by a conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

#### **Examples:**

The shoplifter had stolen clothes, **so** he ran once he saw the police.

Both sides of the conjunction "so" are complete sentences. "The shoplifter had stolen clothes" can stand alone and so can "he ran once he saw the police." Therefore, this is a compound sentence.

They spoke to him in Afrikaans, **but** he responded in English.

This is also a compound sentence that uses a conjunction to separate two individual clauses.

### **Complex Sentences**

A complex sentence is an independent clause joined by one or more dependent clauses. A dependent clause either lacks a subject or a verb or has both a subject and a verb that does not express a complete thought.

A complex sentence always has a subordinator (as, because, since, after, although, when) or relative pronouns (who, that, which).

#### **Examples:**

**After** eating lunch at the Deli, Tim went to the gym to exercise.

The independent clause is "Tim went to the gym to exercise." The subordinating clause before it is dependent on the main, independent clause. If one were to say "after eating lunch at the Deli," it would be an incomplete thought.

Opinionated women are given disadvantages in societies **that** privilege male accomplishments.

The subject is "opinionated women" and the verb is "are given." The first part of the sentence "opinionated women are given advantages in societies" is an independent clause that expresses a complete thought. The following "that privilege male accomplishments" is a relative clause that describes which types of societies.

The woman **who** taught English Foundations 100 was fired for stealing school supplies.

The dependent clause in this sentence is “English Foundations 100” because if removed, the rest of the sentence would stand as an independent clause. “Who taught English Foundations 100” is an adjective clause that provides necessary details about the subject, woman.

### Compound-Complex Sentences

A compound-complex sentence has two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.

**Examples:**  
**After** the two soccer players lost their game, they joined their other teammates for lunch, and they went to the movies.

If we remove the dependent clause “after the two soccer players lost their game,” we have a compound sentence. The dependent clause makes this sentence compound-complex.

The man believed in the system, and he knew that justice would prevail **after** the murderer was sent to jail.

### Other Sentence Types

- Declarative sentences state a fact.  
Example: **Rene’ loves playing football.**
- Imperative sentences give an order.  
Example: **Trevor, fetch the ball.**
- Interrogative sentences ask questions.  
Example: **Which countries did you visit while in Europe?**
- Exclamatory sentences exclaim.  
Example: **Help me!**