
Simple Sentences

1. What is a Simple Sentence?

A simple sentence is the most basic sentence that we have in English. It has just one **independent clause**, which means only one **subject** and one **predicate**. A simple sentence is also the shortest possible sentence; it can have as little as two words!

Overall, a simple sentence is exactly what it sounds like—simple!

2. Examples

A simple sentence can be very short, but some are long too, so long as they only have one subject-verb combination. Here, the **subjects are orange** and the **verbs are green**.

I ate.

I ate dinner.

I ate dinner with my brother and sister.

Last night, **I ate** dinner at a restaurant with my brother and sister.

As you can see, even though some of these sentences are long, each only has one subject and one verb (one **clause**).

3. Parts of Simple Sentences

All sentences have one main important part: an independent clause. Sometimes, they also include other words, like objects and/or modifiers.

a. Independent Clause

An independent clause has a subject and a predicate and makes sense on its own as a complete sentence.

In fact, an independent clause itself is a simple sentence! Here are a few:

The cat ate.

He ate ice cream.

He went to the beach.

The wolf ate steak at the zoo.

So, you can see that all of the clauses above work as sentences. All sentences have an independent clause, but all simple sentences have ONE independent clause.

b. Objects

An **object** is the word affected by the verb or preposition in a sentence. Objects are usually nouns or pronouns that answer questions like “who,” “what,” “where,” and “when?” Here, the **objects are purple**.

The dog ate **bacon**. **What did the dog eat?**

The dog ate **bacon** at the park. **Where did he eat it?**

I took **my dog** to the **park**. **Who did you take there?**

We went to the **park** yesterday. **When did you go?**

So, you can see that the highlighted objects answer the questions above. They make the sentences more informational than they would be without objects.

c. Modifiers

A **modifier** is an adjective or adverb that “modifies” other words in a sentence to make it more descriptive. They help give a clearer idea about the things in the sentence. Here, the **modifiers are grey**.

Let’s start with a simple sentence:

The panda ate corn.

Now, let’s add modifiers:

The **fat** panda **quickly** ate the **buttery** corn.

Modifiers make the sentence more detailed. We now know that the panda was fat, that he ate quickly, and that the corn was buttery! Modifiers can make sentences much more interesting.

4. Types of Simple Sentences

There aren’t exactly different “types” of simple sentences, but they can be written in different ways. As mentioned, sometimes they are very short, or sometimes they include modifiers or objects that make them longer.

a. Simple Sentence with ONLY a Subject and a Verb

As mentioned, simple sentences are the shortest possible complete sentences. You can have a simple sentence with only a **simple subject** and a predicate, using only two or three words, like this:

I see.

He ran.

We looked.

They cooked.

The dog ate.

The baby cried.

Though only two or three words, these are all independent clauses, so they work on their own as complete sentences!

b. Simple Sentence with other Objects or Modifiers

Not all simple sentences are short. So long as it only has one subject and one predicate, a simple sentence can actually be pretty long. Take a look at the extra words in these examples:

I see you behind the cotton candy machine!

He ran to the fair as fast as possible.

We ate buttery corn at the famous farmer's market.

They prepared cotton candy in an old-fashioned machine.

So, a simple sentence can use lots of modifiers and objects to add details, while at the same time only describing one subject doing one thing.

5. How to Avoid Mistakes

The most important thing to remember about simple sentences is that they never have more than one subject or more than one predicate. In other words, there is only one subject doing one thing. A simple sentence CAN have a compound subject (two people using the same verb), but that's still just one subject.

(WRONG) **Maria went** to the market and **bought** an apple. **One subject, two verbs**

(WRONG) **Sandy drove** to the market and **the dog went** with her. **Two subjects, two verbs**

(CORRECT) **Jose went** to the market. **One subject, one verb**

(CORRECT) **Maria and Jose went** to the market. **One compound subject, one verb**

When you start adding more independent or dependent clauses to a sentence, you get a compound, complex, or **compound-complex sentence**. BUT, a simple sentence is just simple—one subject, one predicate.