

Sentence Structure

Outline

- What is a complete sentence?
- Types of sentences
- Using different sentence types
- Summary

What is a complete sentence?

- Sentences provide us with the framework for the clear written expression of our ideas.
- A complete sentence always contains a verb, expresses a complete idea and makes sense standing alone.

e.g. *Andy reads quickly.*

When Andy reads.

When Andy reads, he reads quickly.

Examples

- There is another theory. *Which should not be ignored.*
- There is another theory which should not be ignored.

- The proposal was finally rejected. *Although they considered it.*
- Although they considered the proposal, it was finally rejected.

Types of sentences

- It is important to be able to use a variety of sentence types that are correctly punctuated.
- Sentences are made up of **clauses**: groups of words that express a single idea.
- *Independent clauses* can stand alone as complete sentences.
- *A dependent clause* needs an independent clause to complete its meaning.

Simple sentences

- It consist of just one independent clause; it requires only one punctuation mark at the end.

e.g.

The essay was late.

Compound sentences

- They are made by joining simple (closely related in content) sentences. We can join simple sentences with a **comma** and a word such as: *and, but, so, yet*.

e.g.

The essay was late, so he lost marks.

The essay was late; he lost marks.

Complex sentences

- They are made when we combine an independent clause with a dependent clause.

e.g.

Because his essay was late, he lost marks.

He lost marks because the essay was late.

Note

- The emphasis tends to fall on the clause at the beginning of the sentence.
- Common ways to begin a dependent clause are: **although, as, because, even though, if, instead, through, when, whenever, where, while.**

Cont.

- More than one dependent clause can be used in a sentence.

e.g.

Although there are many dissenters, many of whom were prominent citizens, the policy still stands today.

Compound-complex sentences

- Different types of sentences can be combined to form **compound-complex sentences**.

e.g.

When considering owning a pet, you must calculate the cost, or the animal may suffer.

Using different sentence types

- Sarah is confident. She is a good speaker. She is considered to be an excellent presenter. Everyone finds her interesting. No one has been critical. She is supportive of others. (jerky and abrupt)

Cont.

By combining sentences which are closely related

- Sarah is confident, and she is a good speaker. She is considered to be an excellent presenter. Everyone finds her interesting, and no one has been critical as she is supportive of others.

Another Example

- If you consider buying a puppy, whatever age or breed, always consider the type of house you have, as this is the most important first step, because without considering this first you can find yourself with a dog that, despite your good intentions, you just cannot keep.

This sentence is overly long and complicated.

By shortening sentences

- If you consider buying a puppy, whatever age or breed, always consider the type of house you have. This is the most important first step. Without considering this first, you can find yourself with a dog that you just cannot keep, despite your good intentions.

Summary

- To check the clarity of your sentence structure, try reading the writing aloud, stopping as indicated by the punctuation.
- Does each sentence stand on its own as a complete idea?

Cont.

- Use the guidelines to either break an overly long sentence into shorter sentences, **or**
- join abrupt sentences together to make the writing more fluid.
- Varying the length and type of sentences whilst ensuring correct punctuation, will improve the clarity of your written expression.