

## Sentence Structure

Sentence structure has a strong influence on writing. It affects the ease with which a reader can access the ideas. Furthermore, it influences the cadence of speech or flow. In addition, it offers a way of emphasizing or privileging content/ideas (or doing the opposite). Therefore, knowing the basic sentence types and how to punctuate them offers writers control over how they choose to present information. With practice, producing various types of sentences becomes intuitive.

For some writers, seeing the patterns in the sentences can make checking sentence structure appropriateness or correctness at the editing stage of writing much easier. The table below offers a view of sentence structure based on the types of relationships that connecting words establish within sentences, on the types of sentences that are being created, and on the formula that can represent those types of sentences. The formulas identify the most common patterns and are thanks to the University of Kansas Center for Research's Sentence Writing Strategy (Schumaker & Sheldon, 1985).

### Most Common Sentence Types

All sentence types have subject/s, verb/s, and represent a complete statement. The most common types are simple, compound, and complex.

#### Simple = I

A simple sentence minimally contains a subject and verb resulting in what many refer to as an independent clause or **I** in the case of the Sentence Writing Strategy (SWS)

e.g. She laughed.

Other words can be added as descriptive phrases, but the sentence remains simple.

e.g. In the middle of the night, she laughed uproariously for a full 30 seconds.

#### Compound = I;I or I,cI or I;ca,I

Compound sentences minimally contain two simple sentences. Those two **I**'s are joined by a semi-colon NOT a comma (I,I would produce a comma splice which is undesirable).

e.g. The joke was funny; she laughed (**I;I**).

They can also be joined by coordinating conjunctions (c) or FAN BOYS (see table on following page for a list of c) or by conjunctive adverbs (ca).

e.g. The joke was funny, so she laughed (**I,cI**). Or, The joke was funny; consequently, she laughed (**I;ca,I**).

#### Complex = ID or D,I

Complex sentences are made up of dependent clauses complemented by independent clauses. Dependent clauses (**D**), although they contain subject and verb, cannot stand on their own.

e.g. Because she laughed (**D**).

However, adding an independent clause completes the sentence:

Because she laughed, I knew the joke was funny (**D,I**).

Notice the comma after the dependent clause. If the clauses are reversed, the comma is unnecessary:

I knew the joke was funny because she laughed (**ID**).

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Sentence Structure Table

Types of Relationships	Compound Sentences I;I		Complex Sentences
	Joined by <b>Coordinating Conjunctions (I,cI)</b> Reorder them and you get <b>FAN BOYS</b>	Joined by <b>Conjunctive Adverbs( I;ca,I)</b>	
Addition	and	likewise moreover then besides	Joined by (ID) or starting with (D,I) <b>Subordinating Conjunctions</b>
Contrast or Contradiction	but yet	still nevertheless however instead	
Cause (or Reason) and Effect (or Result)	so for	consequently hence accordingly thus therefore	because as since so that in order that
Alternatives	or nor	otherwise	
Condition			if even if unless though as though although even though
Time		meanwhile subsequently then now thereafter eventually presently	as while after before until whenever when as soon as since
Place			where wherever

Table modified from page 79 of McDonald, Orsini, and Wagner.

### Sources

McDonald, B., Orsini, L. & Wagner, T. J. (1985). *Sentence Combining Practice Plus*. Book 1. Newton, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Schumaker, J. B. & Sheldon, J. (1985). *The Sentence Writing Strategy: Instructor's Manual*. Lawrence, KS: The University of Kansas.