Sentences are categorized according to the number and types of clauses they contain. The names of the four types of sentences are simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. You need to be familiar with these sentence patterns for a number of reasons:

1. **Variety.** Varying your sentence patterns creates interest and avoids monotony. Repeating a sentence pattern endlessly will bore even your most interested reader.

2. **Emphasis.** You can use these sentence patterns to emphasize the ideas that you think are more important than others.

3. **Grammar.** A knowledge of the basic sentence patterns of English will help you avoid the major sentence structure errors discussed in Section Three. Being able to recognize and use these sentence patterns will help you control your writing and thus express your ideas more effectively.

### The Simple Sentence

The introduction to this chapter points out that a sentence must contain at least one main clause. A sentence that contains only one main clause and no other clauses is called a simple sentence. However, a simple sentence is not necessarily an uncomplicated or short sentence because, in addition to its one main clause, it may contain a variety of phrases and modifiers.

The basic pattern for the simple sentence is subject–verb (SV). This pattern may vary in several ways:

- **subject–verb (SV):** The plane flew over the stadium.
- **verb–subject (VS):** Over the stadium flew the plane.
- **subject–subject–verb (SSV):** The plane and the helicopter flew over the stadium.
- **subject–verb–verb (SVV):** The plane flew over the stadium and turned north.
subject–subject–verb–verb (SSVV): The plane and the helicopter flew over the stadium and turned north.

A simple sentence can be brief: It rained.

Or it can be rather long: Enraged by the taunting of the boys, the huge gorilla leaped from his enclosure and chased them up a hill and down a pathway to the exit gates.

The important thing to remember about the simple sentence is that it has only one main clause and no other clauses.

**Practice**

Write your own simple sentences according to the instructions.

1. A simple sentence with the pattern subject–subject–verb:
   
   *Two supermarkets and a department store collapsed in the* _____________.

2. A simple sentence that contains a prepositional phrase.
   
   ____________
   
   ____________
   
   ____________

3. A simple sentence that begins with *there* and has the pattern verb–subject.
   
   ____________
   
   ____________
   
   ____________

4. A simple sentence that expresses a command:
   
   ____________
   
   ____________
   
   ____________
5. A simple sentence that has the pattern subject–subject–verb–verb:

The Compound Sentence

Simply put, a **compound sentence** contains two or more main clauses but no subordinate clauses. The basic pattern of the clauses may be expressed as subject–verb/subject–verb (SV/SV). The main clauses are always joined in one of three ways:

1. Two main clauses may be joined by a comma and one of the seven coordinating conjunctions (*and, or, nor, but, for, so, yet*).

   ![Example](SV/SV)

   **EXAMPLE**

   Maria registered for all of her classes by mail, **but** Brad was not able to do so.

   Remember, the two main clauses must be joined by **both a comma and a coordinating conjunction**, and the comma always comes before the coordinating conjunction.

2. Two main clauses may be joined by a semicolon (**;**).

   ![Example](SV/SV)

   **EXAMPLE**

   Maria registered for all of her classes by mail; **Brad was not able to do so.**

3. Two main clauses may be joined by a semicolon and a transitional word or phrase. Such transitional words or phrases are followed by a comma.

   ![Example](SV/SV)

   **EXAMPLE**

   Maria registered for all of her classes by mail; **however, Brad was not able to do so.**
Below is a list of the most commonly used transitional words and phrases. Do not confuse these words or phrases with coordinating conjunctions or subordinating conjunctions.

- accordingly
- hence
- next
- thus
- also
- however
- nonetheless
- undoubtedly
- besides
- instead
- otherwise
- for instance
- consequently
- meanwhile
- similarly
- for example
- finally
- moreover
- still
- on the other hand
- further
- namely
- then
- that is
- furthermore
- nevertheless
- therefore

---

**Practice**

Write compound sentences of your own according to the instructions.

1. A compound sentence that uses a comma and *but* to join two main clauses:

   *I was very hungry after the game, **but** I decided not to eat anything.*

2. A compound sentence that joins two main clauses with a semicolon:

   __________________________

3. A compound sentence that joins two main clauses with a semicolon and an appropriate transitional word or phrase followed by a comma:

   __________________________

4. A compound sentence that joins two main clauses with a comma and *yet*.

   __________________________

5. A compound sentence that joins two main clauses with a semicolon followed by the transitional word *however* or *therefore*:

   __________________________
In the following sentences, write S above each subject and V above each verb. Then, in the spaces provided, identify each sentence as either simple or compound.

1. Some of the earliest forms of writing appeared around 3500 B.C.E.  
   Simple

2. The Sumerians needed to keep track of food, grain, and other materials used in trade, so they made pictures of the items on clay tablets.  
   Simple

3. These pictures were the first form of writing.  
   Simple

4. The clay tablets were baked in a kiln; as a result, thousands of them have lasted throughout the centuries.  
   Simple

5. The pictures were created with a wedge-shaped instrument; this type of writing is called cuneiform.  
   Simple

6. Gradually, these pictures came to represent the syllables of the Sumerian language.  
   Simple

7. Rather than clay, ancient Egyptians recorded their writing on leather or on a more fragile material.  
   Simple

8. This fragile material was papyrus, and it later came to be called paper.  
   Simple

9. About eighteen hundred years ago, a Chinese inventor made paper from bark and rags.  
   Simple

10. Chinese books were soon written on paper, but the knowledge of paper-making did not reach Europe for a thousand years.  
   Simple
The Complex Sentence

The complex sentence has the same subject–verb pattern (SV/SV) as the compound sentence. However, the complex sentence features only one main clause and always contains at least one subordinate clause and sometimes more than one. The subordinate clauses in a complex sentence may occur at any place in the sentence.

**EXAMPLES**

Before a main clause: After he retired from the Army, Eisenhower ran for president.

After a main clause: Rugby is a sport that I have played only once.

Interrupting a main clause: Emilio’s grandfather, who fought in World War II, told him about his experiences during the war.

Before and after a main clause: When the pianist sat down at the piano, she played a melody that she had written recently.

**PRACTICE**

Write complex sentences of your own according to the instructions.

1. A complex sentence that includes an adjective clause using the relative pronoun who:

   Zelda searched for three days to find the person who had lost the German shepherd.

2. A complex sentence that ends with an adverb clause:
3. A complex sentence that contains an adjective clause using the relative pronoun *which*:

4. A complex sentence that begins with an adverb clause:

5. A complex sentence that contains an adjective clause that uses the word *where*:

---

**The Compound-Complex Sentence**

The *compound-complex sentence* is a combination of the compound and the complex sentence patterns. It is made up of two or more main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses. Therefore, it must contain a minimum of three sets of subjects and verbs (*at least* two main clauses and *at least* one subordinate clause).

**EXAMPLES**

- On the day-long bicycle trip, Ophelia ate the food [that she had packed,]
  - main clause
  - sub. clause
- but Henry had forgotten to bring anything to eat.
  - main clause
  - sub. clause
- Although he was exhausted, [Ernesto cooked dinner for his mother,]
  - main clause
  - sub. clause
- and after dinner he cleaned the kitchen.
  - main clause
  - sub. clause
- The travelers were excited [when they arrived in Paris,]
  - main clause
  - sub. clause
- [they wanted to go sightseeing immediately.]
Write compound-complex sentences of your own according to the instructions.

1. A compound-complex sentence that contains two main clauses joined by and and one adjective clause beginning with who:
   
   Murphy, who works at the Mazda dealership, sold ten Miatas last month, and this month he plans to sell even more.

2. A compound-complex sentence that contains two main clauses and an adverb clause. Use or to join the two main clauses.

3. A compound-complex sentence that contains two main clauses and an adjective clause. Use a semicolon and a transitional word or phrase to join the two main clauses.

4. A compound-complex sentence that contains two main clauses and two adverb clauses:

5. A compound-complex sentence with a pattern of your own choice:
In the following sentences, write S above each subject and V above each verb. Then, in the spaces provided, identify the sentences as simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex.

1. Cinderella is a European fairy tale with over five hundred versions.

   S

   V

   simple

2. The oldest versions are from the ninth century; those early stories do not give Cinderella glass slippers.

   S

   V

   simple

3. The glass slippers appeared when a French version of the story was translated incorrectly.

   S

   V

   complex

4. In older versions, Cinderella’s shoes were made of a rare metal or some other valuable covering.

   S

   V

   simple

5. The French story used white squirrel fur for the slippers, but the French word that meant fur was similar to the word that meant glass.

   S

   V

   compound

6. Charles Perrault, who translated the story in 1697, was the first person to describe the slippers as glass.

   S

   V

   simple

7. Almost all later versions of the story depict Cinderella as wearing glass slippers.

   S

   V

   simple

8. In most of the stories, Cinderella is helped by her fairy godmother; however, some versions use other characters.

   S

   V

   simple

9. Although Cinderella’s mother is dead, she magically appears in one story, and she takes the place of the fairy godmother.

   S

   V

   simple

10. Sometimes cows or goats assist Cinderella, but in the Disney version mice come to her aid.

    S

    V

    compound
Section Two Review

1. A **simple sentence** contains only one main clause and no other clauses.

2. A **compound sentence** contains two or more main clauses that are joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction or a semicolon or a semicolon and a transitional word or phrase.

3. A **complex sentence** contains only one main clause and one or more subordinate clauses.

4. A **compound-complex sentence** contains two or more main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses.
In the spaces provided, identify the following sentences as simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex.

1. Alex was the name of a famous African gray parrot.  
   *simple*

2. Irene Pepperberg, who is a comparative psychologist, bought Alex from a pet shop in 1977.
   *

3. For twenty-two years, Dr. Pepperberg taught Alex to do tasks that only a few nonhuman species can do.
   *

4. Alex seemed to use words creatively.
   *

5. Alex’s speech was not just imitation; instead, it suggested reasoning and choice.
   *

6. Dr. Pepperberg used a novel approach to teach Alex.
   *

7. Another trainer competed with Alex for a reward, and Alex would learn by watching the other trainer.
   *

8. When Alex was shown a blue paper triangle, he could identify the color, the shape, and the material.
   *

9. He had not simply memorized the colors that go with objects; he also identified the correct colors of new objects.
   *

10. Alex could identify fifty different objects, recognize quantities up to six, distinguish seven colors and five shapes, understand “bigger,” “smaller,” “same,” and “different,” and was learning the concepts of “over” and “under.”
    *

11. If Dr. Pepperberg asked Alex to identify the object that was orange and three-cornered, he would choose the right one.
    *
12. Sometimes Alex would grow tired of the questions, so he would ask to go back to his cage.

13. Although many researchers dispute Dr. Pepperberg’s claims, others believe Alex demonstrated the intelligence of a five-year-old human.

14. According to some scientists, Alex expressed conscious thoughts and feelings.

15. African gray parrots often live for fifty years, but Alex died unexpectedly during the night in 2009 when he was less than thirty years old.
A. Combine each set of sentences to create the sentence type asked for. You may need to delete or change some words.

1. A simple sentence with the pattern verb–subject:
   a. The ship was in the harbor.
   b. The ship was a nineteenth-century three-masted schooner.

   In the harbor was a nineteenth-century three-masted schooner.

2. A compound sentence:
   a. Lance Armstrong had retired from racing.
   b. He decided to return for one more Tour de France.

3. A complex sentence:
   a. Hogart would not go to the dance.
   b. Sheba changed her dress.

4. A simple sentence:
   a. I plan to mow my lawn this morning.
   b. I also plan to take a nap this afternoon.

5. A complex sentence:
   a. Josh had not done his homework.
   b. He could not go to the movie with his friends.
continued

6. A simple sentence:
   a. The spider saw the little girl.
   b. The spider sat down beside her.

7. A compound sentence:
   a. The drought had lasted for three years.
   b. No one was allowed to water lawns or wash cars.

8. A compound-complex sentence:
   a. The Subreality Cafe is a dark and gloomy place.
   b. It appeals to people who wear black clothing and dark makeup.
   c. It is one of the most popular cafes in the city.

9. A compound-complex sentence:
   a. “Richard Cory” is a song composed by Paul Simon.
   b. It is included in Simon and Garfunkel’s album Sounds of Silence.
   c. It is originally a poem composed by Edwin Arlington Robinson.

B. Following the instructions, construct sentences of your own.

10. A compound-complex sentence that uses a semicolon:
continued

11. A complex sentence that includes an adjective clause:

12. A compound sentence that uses a semicolon and a transitional word:

13. A simple sentence:

14. A complex sentence that includes an adverb clause at the beginning of the sentence:

15. A compound-complex sentence that does not use a semicolon:
Identify the sentences as simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex.

1. After dark, the shore near my cabin is a mysterious place where the absence of light creates a new reality. **complex**
2. As I was walking along the beach one night recently, I surprised a snow crab in the beam of my flashlight. _________
3. He lay in a pit just above the surface as if he were watching the sea and waiting. _________
4. When I turned off the flashlight, I could feel the darkness around me, and I felt alone with the snow crab. _________
5. I could hear nothing but the elemental sounds of wind blowing over sand and water and waves crashing on the beach. _________
6. When I am on that beach at night, time seems suspended, and I feel alone with the creatures of the shore. _________
7. Those creatures, like the sea anemones and the shore birds, have been there since the dawn of time. _________
8. As my eyes accustom themselves to the dark, the gulls and sanderlings become shadows. _________
9. When I am surrounded by those sights, sounds, and smells, I feel transported into another, older world before humankind. _________
10. The rhythm of the sea becomes the rhythm of the whole world, and the smell becomes a fundamental smell. _________
11. On that recent night, I sat near that snow crab and watched the sea with him. _________
12. Hidden beneath the water before me were patches of bright coral that were the home for blood-red starfish and green sea cucumbers. _________
13. All seemed peaceful then, but on the shore the battle for survival rages incessantly. _________
14. The largest shark and the smallest plankton must search constantly for the food that sustains them. _________
15. In the dim light I saw several hermit crabs scurrying across the sand, and I turned from the dark shore toward the lights of my home. _________