



WRITING CENTER

Sentence Patterns, Types, and Structures

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SENTENCE PATTERNS

English has only six basic sentence patterns. More difficult sentences are combinations of the basic sentences or alterations of them.

The sentence patterns depend on the function of the verb. Verbs are **transitive** or **intransitive**. **Transitive** verbs transfer the action of the verb to a receiver. **Intransitive** verbs have no noun or object to act upon.

- Remember:**
1. Every verb has a subject.
 2. Some transitive verbs have a direct object.
 3. A few transitive verbs have both a direct object and an indirect object.

Note: In the examples for the sentence patterns below:

- *The subject is **bold**.*
- *The verb is underlined.*
- *The prepositional phrases are in (parentheses).*
- *The direct object is italicized.*
- *The indirect object is in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.*

PATTERN 1: Subject and Verb

Consists of a subject and a verb. The verb is intransitive. There may be modifiers to the subject or verb, but these are not necessary to the meaning of the sentence.

Examples: **Boys** sing.

The **boys** (in the choir) (from Detroit) sing (at Christmas).

One (of the thieves) must have been hiding (in the basement).



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PATTERN 2: Subject, Verb, and Direct Object

Consists of a subject, a verb, and a direct object. The verb is transitive because it is acting upon an object directly.

Examples: **Students** write *essays*.

JCCC **students** write amazingly well-written *essays* (about themselves).

PATTERN 3: Subject, Verb, Direct and Indirect Objects

Consists of a subject and a verb with direct and indirect objects:

- The direct object receives the action of the transitive verb and answers **who** or **what**.
- The indirect object indirectly receives the action of the verb and answers **to whom** (or **which**), or **for whom** (or **which**).

Note: There cannot be an indirect object without a direct object.

Examples: **I** gave the TEACHER my *essay*.

I nervously gave my demanding English TEACHER my great *essay*.

Common Verbs for the Subject, Verb, Direct and Indirect Object pattern

allow	ask	assign	give	grant
pay	send	show	tell	write

PATTERN 4: Subject, Verb, Direct Object, and Object Complement

Consists of a subject, a verb, a direct object, and an objective complement.

- The object closest to the verb is the direct object.
- The object further from the verb is the objective complement.
- The objective complement is either:
 - a noun that renames the direct object or
 - an adjective that describes the direct object.

Common Verbs for the Subject, Verb, Direct Object, Object Complement pattern

appoint	call	consider	elect
find	make	name	think



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You can identify sentence pattern #4 by inserting **to be**.

Examples: The **parents** considered their *child* a GENIUS.

Test: The parents considered their child [**to be**] a genius.

The **teacher** thought *him* STUPID.

Test: The teacher thought *him* [**to be**] stupid.

Note: Sometimes the word **as** is used between the direct object and object complement.

PATTERN 5: Subject, Linking Verb, and Noun Complement

Consists of a subject, a linking verb, and a subjective complement.

- A linking verb usually doesn't show action. It links the subject to a new identity or description.
- A subject complement is a word or phrase that follows a linking verb. It identifies the subject with a noun, or describes it with an adjective.

In the example below, the linking verb is underlined, and the subjective complement—a **noun** complement, in this case—is italicized:

Example: The **child** is a *genius*.

She became an *astronaut*.

PATTERN 6: Subject, Linking Verb, and Adjective Complement

Consists of a subject, a linking verb, and a subjective complement.

- A linking verb usually doesn't show action. It links the subject to a new identity or description.
- A subject complement is a word or phrase that follows a linking verb. It identifies the subject with a **noun**, or describes it with an **adjective**.

In the examples below, the linking verb is underlined, and the subjective complement—an **adjective** complement, in this case—is italicized:

Examples: The **cat** appears *sick*.

He sounds *happy*.



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ACTIVE TO PASSIVE

Many sentence patterns can be re-written in the passive voice.

Note: Only transitive verbs can be written as passive verbs.

Examples: *Active:* Students write essays.

Passive: Essays are written by students.

Active: I gave the teacher my essay.

Passive: My essay was given to the teacher by me.

Active: The parents considered their son a genius.

Passive: Their son was considered a genius by the parents.

SENTENCE TYPES

There are four sentence types: **declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory.**

1. The **declarative sentence** makes a statement. It is punctuated with a period (.).

Example: The third essay is due Friday.

2. The **interrogative sentence** asks a question. It is punctuated with a question mark (?).

Example: When is the third essay due?

3. The **imperative sentence** gives a command or makes a request. It is punctuated with a period (.), or an exclamation point (!), depending on the intent of the writer.

Examples: Finish the essay tonight.

The essay must be finished tonight!

Note: In many imperative sentences, the subject **you** is understood.

Example: [You] finish the essay tonight.

4. The **exclamatory sentence** shows excitement or expresses strong feeling. It is punctuated with an exclamation point (!).

Example: What a terrific essay you wrote!

Note: Do not overuse the exclamatory sentence. Save the exclamation points for sentences which show strong emotion.



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SENTENCE STRUCTURES

There are four sentence structures: **simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex.**

SIMPLE

A simple sentence consists of a subject, a verb, a complement, and any modifiers (words or phrases). A simple sentence equals one independent clause.

Example: The hardworking students studied their algebra for many hours.

COMPOUND

A compound sentence consists of two or more simple sentences or independent clauses.

There are three ways compound sentences can be created:

1. Join two simple sentences or independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction, such as **but, yet, and, or, nor, for, so**. When punctuating a compound sentence, a comma is usually included before the conjunction.

Example: The hardworking students studied their algebra for many hours. The unconcerned students partied all night.

The hardworking students studied their algebra for many hours, **but** the unconcerned students partied all night.

2. Join two simple sentences without a coordinating conjunction. Add a semicolon between the two main or independent clauses.

Example: The hardworking students studied their algebra for many hours; the unconcerned students partied all night.

3. Join two simple sentences with a conjunctive adverb, such as **therefore, however, nevertheless, moreover**. The conjunctive adverb introduces the second independent clause. Add a semicolon before the conjunctive adverb and a comma after.

Example: The hardworking students studied their algebra for many hours; however, the unconcerned students partied all night.



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COMPLEX

A complex sentence consists of an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. A dependent clause is subordinate to or dependent to the idea in the independent clause, so it can't stand alone. A dependent clause has a subject, a verb, and possibly a complement.

There are three types of dependent clauses: **noun**, **adjective**, and **adverb**.

1. A **noun dependent clause** can be the subject, object, complement, or appositive of the main or independent clause (an **appositive** is a noun or noun phrase that describes another noun).

Words That Introduce the Noun Dependent Clause

that	what	whatever	when	where
whether	who	whoever	whom	why

Examples: *As an object:* You may go **where you want**.

As a complement: Mary is **whom I want**.

As a subject: **Whoever broke that dish** will be punished.

As an appositive: The realization **that they were lost** hit them.

Note: The conjunction **that** may not always be expressed.

Example: The teacher said [**that**] I was wrong.

2. **An adjective dependent clause** is a modifier, which modifies, limits, or points out a noun or pronoun in the main clause. The adjective clause usually appears after the noun or pronoun it modifies, and is introduced by one of the following words:

Words That Introduce the Adjective Dependent Clause

that	when	where	which
whom	whose	why	who

These words are used within the adjective clause as pronouns (which can be a subject, object, or complement), as adjectives, or as adverbs.

Examples: The person **who studies hard** will succeed.

We saw John, **whose paper received an F**.



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An **essential** or **restrictive** clause does *not* require that commas enclose it.

Example: The book **that I am reading** is boring.

A **nonessential** or **nonrestrictive** clause *does* require that commas enclose it.

Example: We saw Jim, **whom you thought had moved**, after school.

3. **An adverb dependent clause** is a modifier, which limits, or points out a verb, adverb, or adjective in the main clause.

- Adverbial clauses can appear anywhere in the main clause.
- Adverbial clauses at the beginning of the sentence or before the main clause require a comma after them.
- Adverbial clauses after the main clause do not need a comma.

Introduce adverbial clauses with a subordinating conjunction:

Subordinating Conjunctions

Time: when before after since while until as

Example: Mary left **before** John.

Manner: as as if as though though

Example: He looks **as if** he is sick.

Place: where wherever

Example: We went **wherever** we wanted.

Result: that so that

Example: We left early **so that** we could get home on time.

Cause: because since as

Example: She went home **because** she was sick.

Compare: than as

Example: Your dress is prettier **than** mine.



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Condition: if unless provided that on condition that

Example: If I were you I would study harder.

Concession: although though even if

Example: I want to go even if I don't have enough money.

COMPOUND-COMPLEX--A compound-complex sentence consists of one or more dependent clauses added to a compound sentence or two or more independent clauses.

Example: We stayed at the party until it was very late, but our parents did not seem to care.