

Sentence Structure

Center for Excellence in
Writing & Communication

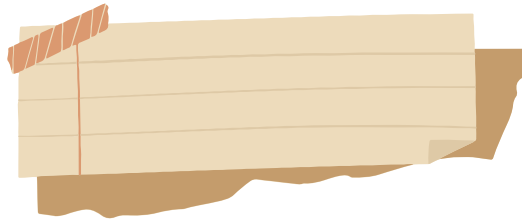
Creating Effective Writing

In our writing, we want to be mindful of the reader's experience and engagement with our ideas. Varying sentence structure is an important part of this— if we always write short, simple sentences the writing may come across as choppy and blunt. If we always use complex, lengthy sentences, the writing may come across as confusing and wordy. Striking a balance between different sentence types is an effective way to create interesting, compelling writing in our papers.

Varying Sentence Types

There are four types of sentences we can use in our writing to create a balance:

- 1) Simple sentences
- 2) Compound sentences
- 3) Complex sentences
- 4) Compound-complex sentences



Simple and Compound Sentences

Simple sentences: A simple sentence is an independent clause (a group of words containing a subject and verb expressing a complete thought) without a coordinating conjunction or dependent clause. (Example: I eat breakfast).

Compound sentences: A compound sentence is two independent clauses joined with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS— For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So.) (Example: I eat breakfast, and I brush my teeth.)

Complex Sentences

Complex sentences: A complex sentence is an independent clause joined to at least one dependent clause using conjunctions or subordinators. Subordinators are relational words that help create a clear relationship between an independent clause and dependent clause. (Example: I eat breakfast while watching Netflix).

Examples of common subordinators: after, although, as, as if, as long as, as much as, because, before, even if, even though, how, if, since, so that, than, unless, until, which, when, whenever, where, while

Compound-Complex Sentences



Compound-complex sentences: A compound-complex sentence joins multiple independent clauses as at least one dependent clause using both conjunctions and subordinators. (Example: While watching Netflix, I eat breakfast, and I prepare for the day ahead.)

*Note: The order of clauses does not matter— a compound-complex sentence may begin with a dependent clause followed by two independent clauses, or any other order. (Example: I eat breakfast while watching Netflix, and I prepare for the day ahead.

—OR— I eat breakfast, and I prepare for the day ahead while watching Netflix.)

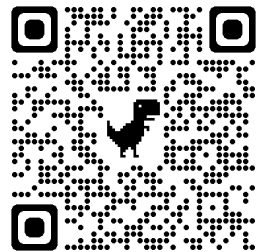


Book an appointment!

FURTHER READING:

For more insight on mechanics and sentence structure, check out our handout on [Comprehending Commas!](#)

We can support you in any writing project as you continue working on varying your sentence structure to create effective writing.



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