Sentence Types

There are many ways to express thoughts in sentence form. This handout explores the different ways that sentences can be structured to express ideas.

Simple Sentence

A **simple sentence** expresses one idea. It is built around **one subject-verb (S-V)** or **subject-verb-object (S-V-O)** combination, and is also called an independent clause.

A simple sentence can be short or long—because it might contain other words which describe the subject and verb. Sometimes a subject is compound, meaning it contains two or more nouns/ subjects. The same is true of verb phrases. Both of the following are simple sentences:

- The student signed. (In this sentence, "student" is the subject and "signed" is the verb.

- The student signed up for a tutoring session. (In this sentence, "student" is the subject, "signed" is the verb, and "tutoring session" is the object).

Compound Sentence

A **compound sentence** connects two or more independent clauses (simple sentences) with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

- The student signed up for a tutoring session, **and** she asked for help with sentence types.

- The student wanted help with sentence types, **so** she signed up for a tutoring session.

There are seven **coordinating conjunctions**. Use the acronym **FANBOYS** to remember them:

for   **a**nd   **n**or   **b**ut   **o**r   **y**et   **s**o

Sometimes two independent clauses may be joined by a semicolon (;) alone. Usually this is done only when the first idea is general and the second illustrates the first, or when the two ideas are clearly related.

- The student signed up for a tutoring session; she asked for help with sentence types.

- The student signed up for a tutoring session; she wanted all the help she could get.

Sentence Types

Complex Sentence

A writer can create a complex sentence by using a subordinating conjunction to connect an independent clause to a dependent clause.

If the subordinating conjunction is between the two clauses, no punctuation is needed:

<u>The student signed up for a tutoring session</u> (independent clause) **because** <u>she wanted help with sentence types</u> (dependent clause).

If the connecting word begins the sentence, put a comma at the end of the first idea:

Because <u>she wanted help with sentence types</u> (dependent clause)**,** <u>the student signed up for a tutoring session </u>(independent clause).

Common subordinating conjunctions

Consider the following examples of subordinating conjunctions used to show cause, condition, relation, and time.

Cause

because	since	so that

Condition

although	even though	unless
as if	if	whether…or not

Relation

that	which	who/whose/whom
what/whatever		

Time

after	before	while
as	when	until

Remember to save often!

Need More Help? Come See Us.

Learn More at the [EXCEL! Zone](#).

Contributors: T. McMurtry; A. Linden; N. Matthews-Bradshaw