

Lecture 2. Types of Sentences. Combining Sentences

Good writing needs to be more than just grammatically correct. A successful essay needs range, style, and variety; so a good way and a simple way to achieve that is just by varying the length and style of the sentences you use in your essays and paragraphs.

Now let's begin to study the different kinds of sentences in English.

There are four kinds of sentences in English:

- 1 simple,
- 2 compound,
- 3 complex, and
- 4 compound-complex.

Every sentence you write actually falls into one of the four categories, and I would like to talk about the first two types of sentences first.

A **simple sentence** is a sentence that has **one subject-verb pair** and is one complete idea.

for example,

Tony flew to Toronto.

Now it's important to know that a simple sentence can also have a compound subject

for example,

Tony and Janet flew to Toronto

Although there are two subjects there, you have still maintained one complete idea; therefore, it is still a simple sentence.

Similarly, a simple sentence can also have a compound verb or two verbs:

Tony flew to Toronto and visited some friends.

Although there are two verbs in a sentence, there is one subject. It is really one complete thought and is, therefore, a simple sentence.

The second kind of sentences is called **a compound sentence**. It is when you take two simple sentences or two independent clauses and connect

them to make one smooth sentence. There are three different ways to do that:

Option 1 to make a compound sentence is by **using a coordinating conjunction with a comma**. Coordinating conjunctions are **and, but, or, so, for, yet, or, nor**. If you use a comma plus one of these seven words to connect two simple sentences, you've got a compound sentence.

for example,

I had a very long day, so I'm going to bed.

or

A promotion at work can come with stress of added responsibilities, but it can also be very rewarding.

Option 2 is simply using a semicolon to connect your two ideas. Rather than using a conjunction you can use the semicolon to show the relationship between two independent clauses.

for example

I've washed the dishes every day this week; today it is your turn.

or

The storm was very destructive; many people lost their homes.

When you're looking at these two sentences it is clear that the semicolon represents a cause-and-effect relationship between the two sentences. Be careful not to use the semicolon to show contrast because it could confuse the reader. If you look at this sentence you will see that the meaning is unclear and can confuse the reader:

The team has very devoted fans; they never win.

Option 3 for making a compound sentence is using a semicolon with a word that we call a conjunctive adverb. By conjunctive adverb I mean a word like **therefore, however, as a results, consequently** and so on. If you set a semicolon with that one of these words, you make a compound sentence.

for example,

Jason passed the exam; however, he is not completely satisfied with his test results.

or

Many people lost their homes in the storm; therefore, they were forced to rebuild.

To sum up, there are three different ways to make a compound sentence. Now look at these three examples that all have the same meaning:

Tim missed the beginning of the movie, so I had to explain the story to him.

Tim missed the beginning of the movie; I had to explain the story to him.

and

Tim missed the beginning of the movie; therefore, I had to explain the story to him.

Those are the first two of the four kinds of sentences in English. Let's go on.

The 3 type of sentences is a **complex sentence**. We have already talked about **compound sentences** which are two independent clauses or two complete ideas connected together. A **complex sentence** is different because it's made up of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. A dependent clause is a group of words that have a subject and a verb but alone is incomplete. Let me give you an example of a dependent clause:

When I was walking home from school.

Alone that is incomplete and needs to be attached to an independent clause in order to make sense. Anytime you start a clause or a sentence with a subordinating conjunction like **when** or **although** **because** **if** or **until** you're creating a dependent clause. Let me show you an example of a **complex sentence**:

When I was walking home from school I slipped and fell on the ice.

That sentence is complete.

Another example is:

Because Kevin had limited experience, the company was hesitant to hire him.

Again, “Because Kevin had limited experience” is the dependent clause and the second part “the company was hesitant to hire him” is independent because that is a complete idea.

You should also note that with the complex sentence the order of the clauses can be inverted, so you could also say:

The company was hesitant to hire Kevin because he had limited experience.

The only difference is if you begin with the dependent clause it has to be followed by a comma; whereas if you start the sentence with the independent clause no comma is necessary.

The 4 kind of sentence in the English language is a **compound-complex sentence** which is exactly what it sounds like. It is a compound sentence and a complex sentence connected together. It needs at least **two independent clauses** and **one or more dependent clauses**.

Let me show you how we make one. Here is a **compound sentence**:

Children can be influenced by what they see; therefore, it is important for parents to communicate with their children about the programs they watch.

That's a **compound** sentence. Let me show you a **complex sentence**:

When young people are exposed to violence on television, they can be influenced by what they see.

Both of these sentences are connected, are related. Let's put them together to make one sentence:

When young people are exposed to violence on television, they can be influenced by what they see; therefore, it is important for parents to communicate with their children about the programs they watch.

That sentence seems long but really it's just two independent clauses in one dependent clause.

It is important to remember that having too many short simple sentences or having too many long complicated sentences could both be problematic; so, it's really important to vary the number of complex, simple or compound sentences that you use in your paragraphs.