Sentence Forms

Resources: The LB Brief Handbook, 5th edition; Middle Tennessee State University; and The Complete Writer’s Workout Book

There are four types of sentences, and using all four types throughout your paper will add variety and keep your reader’s attention. The four types of sentences are simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. All of these sentence types are made up of combinations of independent and dependent clauses. An independent clause can stand on its own as a complete sentence, but a dependent clause must be attached to another sentence.

Examples:
- Independent clause: The whale swam out to the open sea. (Italics will be used to indicate independent clauses throughout this handout).
- Dependent clause: Before I go to work. (Bold will be used to indicate dependent clauses throughout this handout).

Dependent clauses must be connected to an independent clause because they depend on an independent clause to complete their meaning. Dependent clauses normally start with subordinating conjunctions (because, although, after, before, when, etc.) or relative pronouns (which, who, & that).

Types of Sentences

Simple Sentence: A simple sentence consists of one independent clause and no dependent clauses.
- My dog had puppies.
- The unusually hot summer weather made farming quite difficult.
**Compound Sentence:** A compound sentence connects at least two *independent clauses* but contains no *dependent clauses*. There are two ways to connect two *independent clauses*: 1) a comma and a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) or 2) a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb (THINTIC: therefore, however, indeed, nevertheless, then, in fact, consequently).

- *The boys created a new game, but the girls did not want to play.*
  (Two *independent clauses* linked by a comma and the coordinating conjunction ‘but’)

- *The boys created a new game; however, the girls did not want to play.*
  (A semicolon and the conjunctive adverb ‘however’ link the two *independent clauses* together.)

**Complex Sentence:** A complex sentence contains one *independent clause* and at least one *dependent clause*.

- *Because I was late for school, I hurried out the door.*
- *We had to leave the school when it started storming.*

**Compound-Complex Sentence:** A compound-complex sentence contains at least two *independent clauses* and at least one *dependent clause*.

- *I really like my boss, but he doesn’t seem to like me even though I try hard at work.*

- *Because I was late to school yesterday, I missed my English test, but my teacher let me take it today.*