

Clauses and Sentence Types
APSU Writing Center Handout

Independent Clause

Can stand alone as a sentence.

Contains a subject, a verb, and expresses a complete thought.

Example: The researcher conducted an experiment.

Example: She submitted her final draft.

Dependent Clause

Cannot stand alone as a complete sentence.

Must be attached to an independent clause.

Often begins with a subordinating conjunction (although, because, when, etc.).

Example: **Although the researcher conducted an experiment**, she needed more data.

Example: **Because she submitted her final draft**, the professor was able to review it.

Sentence Components

Subject

The person, place, thing, or concept performing the action.

Identify the subject by asking, "Who or what?"

- **Example:** **The professor** graded the essays.
- **Example:** **My classmate** shared her notes.

Verb

Expresses action or a state of being. Identify the verb by asking: “What happened?”

- **Example:** The professor **graded** the essays.
- **Example:** The discussion **was** insightful. ("was" is a linking verb.)

Object

Receives the action in a sentence. Identify by asking: “The subject did what?” or “To whom?/For whom?”

- **Example:** The student wrote **a research paper**.
- **Example:** The editor revised **the manuscript**.

Prepositional Phrase

Begins with a preposition (in, at, for, behind, until, after, etc.) and modifies a word in the sentence.

- **Example:** The student wrote a research paper **for the journal submission**.
- **Example:** The editor revised the manuscript **before publication**.

Sentence Structure

A complete sentence:

- It begins with a capital letter.
- Ends with punctuation (period, question mark, or exclamation point).
- Contains at least one subject.
- Contains a verb or verb phrase.
- Usually follows Subject + Verb + Object order.

- Expresses a complete thought (independent clause).
 - **Example:** The group finalized their presentation.

Sentence Types

Simple Sentence

Contains one independent clause. Expresses a complete thought.

- **Example:** She reviewed her notes.
- **Example:** He drafted a proposal. **Example:** They discussed the hypothesis.

Compound Sentence

Contains at least two independent clauses, joined by a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) or a semicolon.

- **Example:** The professor gave an assignment, and the students completed it.
- **Example:** The editor revised the article, but the author requested additional changes.

Complex Sentence

Contains one independent clause and at least one dependent clause.

- **Example:** Although the student studied extensively, he was still nervous for the exam.
- **Example:** They cited multiple sources as they wanted to strengthen their argument.

Compound-Complex Sentence

Contains at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.

- **Example:** Although he submitted his essay, he forgot his citation, so he had to revise it.

- **Example:** They discussed the results, and they decided to include additional references because they wanted to support their claims.

References

University of Nevada, Reno Writing & Speaking Center. (2023). Sentence types. University of Nevada, Reno. <https://www.unr.edu/writing-speaking-center/writing-speakingresources/sentence-types>

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