

In the name of God

.

.

A concise pamphlet

.

about

.

English Sentence Structure

.

Types of sentences

.

Types of clauses

.

Types of phrases

.

Parallel structure



Types of sentences

Simple sentence

This simple sentence has one independent clause which contains one subject, *girl*, and one predicate, *ran into her bedroom*. The predicate is a verb phrase that consists of more than one word.

- *The girl ran into her bedroom.*
- *I like rain.*

Compound sentence

A compound sentence is composed of at least two independent clauses. It does not require a dependent clause. The clauses are joined by a **coordinating** conjunction (with or without a comma), a semicolon that functions as a conjunction, a colon instead of a semicolon between two sentences when the second sentence explains or illustrates the first sentence and no coordinating conjunction is being used to connect the sentences, or a conjunctive adverb preceded by a semicolon. A conjunction can be used to make a compound sentence. Conjunctions are words such as *and, but, or, nor, yet, and so*. Examples:

- I started on time, but I arrived late.
- I will accept your offer or decline it; these are the two options.
- The law was passed: from April 1, all cars would have to be tested.
- The war was lost; consequently, the whole country was occupied.

The use of a comma to separate two independent clauses without the addition of an appropriate conjunction is called a comma splice and is generally considered an error (when used in the English language).

- The sun was shining, everyone appeared happy.

A **complex sentence** has at least one independent clause plus at least one dependent clause.

I enjoyed the apple pie that you bought for me.

A complex sentence has one or more dependent clauses (also called subordinate clauses). Since a dependent clause cannot stand on its own as a sentence, complex sentences must also have at least one independent clause. In short, a sentence with one or more dependent clauses and at least one independent clause is a complex sentence.

complex-compound sentence or compound-complex sentence.

A sentence consisting of at least one dependent clause and at least two independent clauses.

The dog lived in the garden, but the cat, who was smarter, lived inside the house.

incomplete sentence or sentence fragment.

An incomplete sentence, or sentence fragment, is a set of words which does not form a complete sentence, either because it does not express a complete thought or because it lacks some grammatical element, such as a subject or a verb. A dependent clause without an independent clause is one example of an incomplete sentence.

What an idiot!

Run-on (fused) sentences

A *run-on* or *fused* sentence consists of two or more independent clauses (i.e. clauses with subject and predicate) that are joined without any appropriate punctuation.

"It is nearly half past five we cannot reach town before dark."

In general, run-on sentences occur when two or more independent clauses are joined without using a coordinating conjunction (i.e. *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) or correct punctuation (i.e. semicolon, dash, or period).

Clause

Definition: a group of words containing a subject and predicate and functioning as a member of a complex or compound sentence.

Types of clauses

Adverbial.....Relative(adjective).....Noun.....

Adverbial clause

Adverbial clauses are divided into several groups according to the actions or senses of their conjunctions:

Type of clause	Common conjunctions	Function	Example
<i>time</i>	Conjunctions answering the question "when?", such as: when, before, after, since, while, as, as long as, till, until, by the time, as soon as , etc.; or the paired (correlative) conjunctions: hardly...when, scarcely...when, barely...when, no sooner...than	These clauses: Say <i>when</i> something happens by referring to a period or point of time, or to another event.	Her goldfish died when she was young . He came after night had fallen . We barely had gotten there when mighty Casey struck out .
<i>condition</i>	if, unless, lest, provided that, only if, even if, in case	Talk about a possible or counterfactual situation and its consequences.	If they lose weight during an illness , they soon regain it afterwards.
<i>purpose</i>	so that, in order that,	Indicate the	They had to take some of his

		purpose of an action.	land so that they could extend the churchyard.
<i>reason</i>	because, since, as, given that,	Indicate the reason for something.	I couldn't feel anger against him because I liked him too much.
<i>concession</i>	although, though, while, even though	Make two statements, one of which contrasts with the other or makes it seem surprising.	I used to read a lot although I don't get much time for books now.
<i>place</i>	Answering the question "where?": where, wherever, anywhere, everywhere, etc.	Talk about the location or position of something.	He said he was happy where he was.
<i>comparison</i>	as...as, than, as	State comparison of a skill, size or amount, etc.	Johan can speak English as fluently as his teacher. She is a better cook than I.
<i>manner</i>	Answering the question, "how?": as, like, the way, as if, as though	Talk about someone's behavior or the way something is done.	I was never allowed to do things as I wanted to do. He spent a lot of money as if he was very rich.
<i>results</i>	so...that, such...that	Indicate the result(s) of an act or event.	My suitcase had become so damaged that the lid would not stay closed.

<i>consecutive</i>	so, so then,	In these clauses the conclusion or logical continuation of what has been said in the main sentence is stated.	Peter usually fantasizes a lot so you do not believe his stories. We did not make reservations on time, so we will not go to the representation.
--------------------	---------------------	---	---

Relative clauses (adjective clause)

Relative clauses are clauses starting with the relative pronouns **who***, **that**, **which**, **whose**, **where**, **when**. They are most often used to define or identify the noun that precedes them. Here are some examples:

- Do you know the girl **who** started in grade 7 last week?
- Can I have the pencil **that** I gave you this morning?
- A notebook is a computer **which** can be carried around.
- I won't eat in a restaurant **whose** cooks smoke.
- I want to live in a place **where** there is lots to do.
- Yesterday was a day **when** everything went wrong!

* There is a relative pronoun **whom**, which can be used as the object of the relative clause. For example:

My science teacher is a person whom I like very much.

To many people the word whom now sounds old-fashioned, and it is rarely used in spoken English.

Relative pronouns are associated as follows with their preceding noun:

Preceding noun	Relative pronoun	Examples
a person	who(m)/that, whose	- Do you know the girl who .. - He was a man that .. - An orphan is a child whose parents ..
a thing	which†/that, whose	- Do you have a computer which .. - The oak a tree that .. - This is a book whose author ..

Note 1: The relative pronoun **whose** is used in place of the possessive pronoun. It must be followed by a noun. Example: *There's a boy in grade 8 whose father is a professional tennis player.* (There's a boy in grade 8. His father is a professional tennis player.)

Note 2: The relative pronouns **where** and **when** are used with place and time nouns. Examples: *FIS is a school where children from more than 50 countries are educated. 2001 was the year when terrorists attacked the Twin Towers in New York.*

Some relative clauses, called non-defining relative clause, are not used to define or identify the preceding noun but to give *extra information* about it. Here are some examples:

- My ESL teacher, who came to Germany in 1986, likes to ride his mountain bike.
- The heavy rain, which was unusual for the time of year, destroyed most of the plants in my garden.
- Einstein, who was born in Germany, is famous for his theory of relativity.
- The boy, whose parents both work as teachers at the school, started a fire in the classroom.
- My mother's company, which makes mobile phones, is moving soon from Frankfurt to London.
- In the summer I'm going to visit Italy, where my brother lives.

Note 1: Relative clauses which give extra information, as in the example sentences above, **must** be separated off by commas.

Note 2: The relative pronoun **that** cannot be used to introduce an extra-information (non-defining) clause about a person. Wrong: *Neil Armstrong, that was born in 1930, was the first man to stand on the moon.* Correct: *Neil Armstrong, who was born in 1930, was the first man to stand on the moon.*

There are two common occasions, particularly in spoken English, when the relative pronoun is omitted:

1. When the pronoun is the object of the relative clause. In the following sentences the pronoun that can be left out is enclosed in (brackets):

- Do you know the girl (who/m) he's talking to?
- Where's the pencil (which) I gave you yesterday?
- I haven't read any of the books (that) I got for Christmas.
- I didn't like that girl (that) you brought to the party.
- Did you find the money (which) you lost?

Note: You **cannot** omit the relative pronoun a.) if it starts a non-defining relative clause, or, b.) if it is the subject of a defining relative clause. For example, *who* is necessary in the following sentence: *What's the name of the girl who won the tennis tournament?*

2. When the relative clause contains a present or past participle and the auxiliary verb *to be*. In such cases both relative pronoun and auxiliary can be left out:

- Who's that man (who is) standing by the gate?
- The family (that is) living in the next house comes from Slovenia.
- She was wearing a dress (which was) covered in blue flowers.
- Most of the parents (who were) invited to the conference did not come.
- Anyone (that is) caught writing on the walls will be expelled from school.

Noun Clauses

A noun clause is a clause that plays the role of a noun.

- I like what I see.
- I know that the tide is turning.
- I've met the man who won the lottery.

Compare the three examples above to these:

- I like **cakes**.

- I know **London**.
- I've met **Madonna**.

The words in bold are all nouns. This shows that shaded clauses in the first three examples are functioning as nouns, making them *noun clauses*.

Like any noun, a noun clause can be a subject, an object, or a complement.

In a sentence, a noun clause will be a dependent clause. In other words, a noun clause does not stand alone as a complete thought.

Examples of Noun Clauses

Here are some examples of noun clauses:

- **That he believes his own story** is remarkable. (Jerome Blattner)
(This noun clause is the subject of the sentence. Be aware that starting a sentence with a noun clause starting *That* is acceptable, but it grates on lots of people's ears. As a result, many writers prefer to precede it with "The fact...".)
- Ask your child **what he wants for dinner** only if he's buying. (Fran Lebowitz)
(This noun clause is the direct object of *ask*.)
- He knows all about art, but he doesn't know **what he likes**. (James Thurber, 1894-1961)
(This noun clause is the direct object of *know*.)
- It is even harder for the average ape to believe **that he has descended from man**. (H L Mencken, 1880-1956)
(This noun clause is the direct object of *believe*.)
- I never know how much of **what I say** is true. (Bette Midler)
(This noun clause is an object of a preposition.)
- Man is **what he eats**. (Ludwig Feuerbach)
(This noun clause is a subject complement.)
- My one regret in life is **that I am not someone else**. (Woody Allen)
(This noun clause is a subject complement.)

Whereas clauses are larger units that always contain at least a subject and a verb, phrases are smaller parts of the sentence.

Sometimes they are essential to the structure of a clause (e.g., a noun phrase that functions as the subject), and sometimes they just provide some extra information (most prepositional phrases).

TYPES OF PHRASES

Definition: A **phrase** is a group of words without subject and verb, expresses a concept and is used as a unit within a sentence.

Noun Phrase

A noun phrase is any noun or pronoun along with its modifiers:

The school children
Yesterday's newspaper
An old and rusted slinky

Verb Phrase

A verb phrase is any number of verbs working together:

Had been sleeping
Will contact
May have written

Verb phrases often contain adverbs that change the meaning of the phrase:

Has **never** lost
May **not** trespass
Am **always** looking

As the last example shows, verb phrases may include verbals (*looking* is a present participle), but a verbal by itself is not a verb.

Prepositional Phrase

A prepositional phrase always starts with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun (and its modifiers) that is called the *object of the preposition*:

Through the wheat field

Preposition: through

Object of the preposition: the wheat field

Here are some more examples of prepositional phrases:

During the year
Despite complaints
In the summer

Verbal Phrases

There are three types of verbal phrases: participial phrases, gerund phrases, and infinitive phrases. Each is explained below.

Participial Phrase

Participial phrases start with either a present or past participle. Here are some examples of each.

Phrases with present participles:

Lounging by the pool
Chasing a butterfly
Watching silently

Phrases with past participles:

Struck by lightning
Driven to succeed
Loaned out

Gerund Phrase

A gerund phrase is a present participle (and its modifiers) that acts like a noun. It can take on a variety of jobs in the sentence. Here are a couple of examples:

Practicing helped a lot. (subject)
I love **reading**. (direct object)

Infinitive Phrase

An infinitive phrase is the infinitive and its modifiers:

To sing
To walk all that way
To mix peanut butter and jam

The infinitive phrase can also function in various ways:

To give to charity is a noble thing. (subject)

The neighbours have promised **to stop** playing the drums at night. (direct object)

Appositive Phrase

An appositive phrase is a phrase that renames an earlier noun or pronoun:

My best friend, **Nick Palacio**, loves scuba diving.
We watched Sirius, **the brightest star in the sky**.

In these examples, the appositive is a noun phrase. But you can use other phrases as appositives too:

My dream, **to make it to the NBA**, is what keeps me going. (infinitive phrase)

Matthew's special talent, **bouncing on his head on the trampoline**, gives him a unique perspective on life. (participial phrase)

Appositives are great for inserting some extra information in a sentence.

Parallel Structure

Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. This can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. The usual way to join parallel structures is with the use of coordinating conjunctions such as "and" or "or."

1. Words and Phrases

With the -ing form (gerund) of words:

Parallel: Mary likes *hiking*, *swimming*, and *bicycling*.

With infinitive phrases:

Parallel: Mary likes *to hike*, *to swim*, and *to ride* a bicycle.

OR

Mary likes to *hike*, *swim*, and *ride* a bicycle.

Note: You can use "to" before all the verbs in a sentence or only before the first one.)

Do not mix forms.

Example 1

Not Parallel: Mary likes *hiking*, *swimming*, and *to ride* a bicycle.

Parallel: Mary likes *hiking*, *swimming*, and *riding* a bicycle.

Example 2

Not Parallel: The production manager was asked to write his report *quickly*, *accurately*, and *in a detailed manner*.

Parallel: The production manager was asked to write his report *quickly*, *accurately*, and *thoroughly*.

Example 3

Not Parallel: The teacher said that he was a poor student because he *waited* until the last minute to study for the exam, *completed* his lab problems in a careless manner, and *his motivation was* low.

Parallel: The teacher said that he was a poor student because he *waited* until the last minute to study for the exam, *completed* his lab problems in a careless manner, and *lacked* motivation.

2. Clauses

A parallel structure that begins with clauses must keep on with clauses. Changing to another pattern or changing the voice of the verb (from active to passive or vice versa) will break the parallelism.

Example 1

Not Parallel: The coach told the players *that they should get* a lot of sleep, *that they should not eat* too much, and *to do* some warm- up exercises before the game.

Parallel: The coach told the players *that they should get* a lot of sleep, *that they should not eat* too much, and *that they should do* some warm- up exercises before the game.

-- or --

Parallel: The coach told the players that they should *get* a lot of sleep, not *eat* too much, and *do* some warm- up exercises before the game.

Example 2

Not Parallel: The salesman expected *that he would present* his product at the meeting, *that there would be* time for him to show his slide presentation, and *that questions would be asked* by prospective buyers.
(passive)

Parallel: The salesman expected *that he would present* his product at the meeting, *that there would be* time for him to show his slide presentation, and *that prospective buyers would ask* him questions.

3. Lists after a colon

Be sure to keep all the elements in a list in the same form.

Example 1

Not Parallel: The dictionary can be used for these purposes: to find *word meanings*, *pronunciations*, *correct spellings*, and *looking up irregular verbs*.

Parallel: The dictionary can be used for these purposes: to find *word meanings*, *pronunciations*, *correct spellings*, and *irregular verbs*.

Good luck.