

SIMPLE, COMPOUND, AND COMPLEX SENTENCES

Essays are made up of paragraphs.
Paragraphs are made up of sentences.

Sentences are made up of words, phrases, clauses, and ideas.

It is advisable to study Unit 3: Independent and Dependent Clauses before studying Unit 4.

In Unit 3, you studied the difference between phrases and clauses, and you learned about independent and dependent clauses. The focus of Unit 4 is the different ways you can organize these clauses and phrases into sentences. The three most important types of sentences to learn are simple, compound, and complex.

Writing Effective Sentences

The following five important aspects of writing effective sentences will help you engage with your reader:

- Accuracy: write sentences with accurate grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation.
- Style: write sentences in a style that is appropriate for your task and for your reader(s).
- Variety: use a variety of sentence types rather than relying too much on one type.
- Coherence and cohesion: write sentences with a logical structure, in which information and ideas are linked effectively.
- Emphasis: use different types of sentences to emphasize key information.

Simple Sentences

An independent clause standing alone forms a simple sentence. Remember: an independent clause must have a subject and a corresponding verb (a verb that agrees with the subject). The following is an example of a simple sentence:

Gregor Mendel **was** the founder of modern genetics.



The sentence is a simple sentence because it is made up of one independent clause that has a subject and a corresponding verb:

Gregor Mendel was . . .

TASK 1

Compare the following two sentences, paying particular attention to the underlined words:

1. I studied genetics during my student days.
2. I studied genetics when I was a student.

Referring to the underlined words, explain why sentence 1 is a simple sentence but sentence 2 is not.

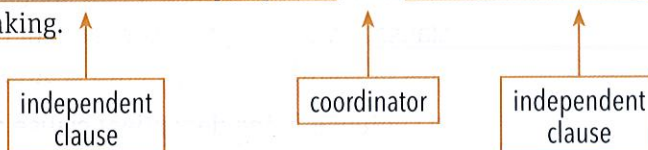
sentence 1 has a subject and a corresponding verb but sentence 2 has
2 clauses including 2 subjects and 2 verbs

Compound Sentences

See Appendix 1 for a detailed explanation of how to use coordinators.

Compound sentences are made up of at least two independent clauses joined by a “FANBOYS” coordinator (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*). In compound sentences, the information or ideas in each of the independent clauses are normally given equal emphasis. The following is an example of a compound sentence:

Mendel analyzed inheritance in pea plants, and his work was later recognized as groundbreaking.



The ideas in the two independent clauses of this compound sentence are given equal emphasis. Note the punctuation: In North American varieties of English, compound sentences normally include a comma before the coordinator joining the two clauses. In British and other varieties of English, the comma is often omitted.

TASK 2

Insert one of the FANBOYS coordinators in each of the compound sentences below to join the ideas. There may be more than one correct answer.

1. Many people know Gregor Mendel as the founder of genetics, but _____ few people know of the struggles he faced in his life.
2. Mendel was the son of poor farmers, so _____ he struggled financially as a student.
3. Mendel suffered from illness as a young man, so _____ he had to take long breaks from his education.
4. Mendel trained as a priest, but _____ people today know him better as a scientist.
5. Years after his death, Mendel's studies were replicated, yet _____ scientists validated his findings.
6. Mendel's studies were validated after his death, so _____ his work eventually gained broader recognition.

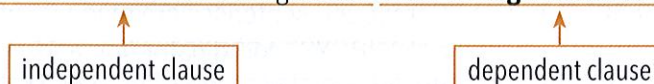
Complex Sentences

A sentence that combines at least one independent clause and one dependent clause is called a *complex sentence*. Complex sentences allow writers to express relationships between ideas (for example, cause and effect, time sequence, contrast); for this reason, many writers prefer to use complex sentences in academic writing. Complex sentence structure also allows writers to emphasize certain information in the sentence. The following are examples of complex sentences:

1. **Even though** I studied biology, I don't know much about modern genetics.



2. I don't know much about modern genetics **even though** I studied biology.



In both sentences, the subordinator *even though* makes one of the clauses dependent. In sentence 1, the independent clause comes after the dependent clause. As a result, the independent clause is given more emphasis. The writer's lack of knowledge of genetics is stressed.

In sentence 2, the dependent clause comes after the independent clause. In this sentence, it is less clear which information is emphasized. Also, notice that there is no comma separating the two clauses when the dependent clause comes second in the sentence.

TASK 3

Rewrite each of the following sentences from Task 2 as a complex sentence, using an appropriate subordinator. Refer to the table of subordinators in Appendix 1 for help if needed.

1. Many people know Gregor Mendel as the founder of genetics, yet few people know of the struggles he faced in his life.

Although many pp know Gregor Mendal as the founder of genetics, few pp know of the struggles he faced in his life.

2. Mendel suffered from illness as a young man, so he had to take long breaks from his education.

Because Mendel suffered from illness as a young man, he had to take long breaks from his education.

3. Mendel trained as a priest, but people today know him better as a scientist.

Although Mendel trained as a priest, pp today know him better as a scientist.

4. Mendel's studies were validated after his death, so his work eventually gained broader recognition.

Since Mendel's studies were validated after his death, his work eventually gained broader recognition.

TASK 4

You can use conjunctive adverbs such as *moreover*, *however*, and *therefore* to add cohesion to sentences. Using conjunctive adverbs instead of coordinators also adds a sense of formality. Complete each of the following compound sentences with a conjunctive adverb for addition (*moreover*), contrast (*however*), or result (*therefore*).

1. Many people know Gregor Mendel as the founder of genetics; however, few people know of the struggles he faced in his life.
2. Mendel was the son of poor farmers; therefore, he struggled financially as a student.
3. Mendel suffered from illness as a young man; thus, he had to take long breaks from his education.
4. Mendel trained as a priest; however, people today know him better as a scientist.
5. Mendel's studies were validated after his death; therefore, his work gained broader recognition.

Varying Sentence Types

If you write paragraphs with too many simple sentences, your writing may seem choppy (lacking good flow) and simplistic. Similarly, if you use too many compound sentences to describe complex relationships between ideas, your arguments may seem less convincing to your reader. It is important, therefore, to use a variety of sentence types in academic writing. This makes your writing more enjoyable to read, and your ideas more convincing.

TASK 5

Indicate whether the following sentences are simple, compound, or complex.

1. After I graduated from university, I became a science teacher.
☐ Simple ☐ Compound ☒ Complex
2. After graduating from university, I became a science teacher.
☒ Simple ☐ Compound ☐ Complex



3. My parents wanted me to work for NASA, but I wanted to be a teacher.
☐ Simple ☒ Compound ☐ Complex
4. I'm going to do a Ph.D., which should help me become an academic.
☐ Simple ☐ Compound ☒ Complex
5. I want to become an academic, so I'm planning to do a Ph.D. in physics.
☐ Simple ☒ Compound ☐ Complex
6. I'm planning to do a Ph.D. in physics because I want to become an academic.
☐ Simple ☐ Compound ☒ Complex
7. Before I start my doctoral studies, I need to get some work experience.
☐ Simple ☐ Compound ☒ Complex
8. Before starting my doctoral studies, I need to get some work experience.
☒ Simple ☐ Compound ☐ Complex
9. I want to do a Ph.D., but first I need to get more work experience.
☐ Simple ☒ Compound ☐ Complex

TASK 6

The following paragraph is made up entirely of simple sentences, which makes it choppy and simplistic. Improve the style of the paragraph by rewriting it so that it contains at least one compound sentence and one complex sentence.

DNA

DNA contains people's individual genetic code. DNA stands for "deoxyribo-nucleic acid." DNA is found in the nucleus and mitochondria of cells. Children inherit DNA from their parents. Therefore, DNA tests can monitor inherited diseases. For DNA testing, samples of blood, hair, or saliva are taken. Then a lab extracts the DNA for analysis. Commercial DNA tests are not 100% accurate. However, they are becoming increasingly popular.

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TASK 7

The following paragraph contains too many compound sentences (the coordinators are in bold). Improve the style of the paragraph by rewriting it with a variety of sentence types.

The Twins Study

The Twins Study was set up by NASA, **and** brothers Scott and Mark Kelly were the main subjects of the study. NASA astronauts Scott and Mark were born identical twins, **but** they are no longer twins according to the Twins Study results. As part of the study, Scott spent an extended period on the International Space Station, **and** his twin Mark remained on Earth. Seven percent of Scott's DNA changed in space, **so** he was no longer Mark's identical twin on his return to Earth. There were some positive results to the study, **but** most findings illustrated the detrimental effects of living in space on humans' DNA.

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SUMMARY

SIMPLE, COMPOUND, AND COMPLEX SENTENCES

Type of Sentence	Examples	Concepts
Simple sentence	a) <u>Gregor Mendel</u> was the founder of modern genetics. b) I studied genetics during my student days.	a) & b) An independent clause containing at least a subject and a corresponding verb
Compound sentence	a) Mendel was the son of poor farmers, and he struggled financially as a student. b) Mendel trained as a priest, but people today know him better as a scientist.	a) & b) Two independent clauses joined by a "FANBOYS" coordinator a) & b) The ideas in the two independent clauses receive equal emphasis.
Complex sentence	a) Even though I studied biology, I don't know much about modern genetics. b) I don't know much about modern genetics even though I studied biology.	a) A dependent clause followed by an independent clause, separated by a comma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Even though</i> makes the first clause dependent. Emphasis is often on the idea in the independent clause if it comes second: <i>I don't know much about modern genetics.</i> b) An independent clause followed by a dependent clause, without a comma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis is less clear if the dependent clause comes second.