

Effective sentence structure

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1. What's a sentence?

- A group of words that:
 - expresses one complete thought
 - has a specific structure
 - starts with a capital
 - ends with punctuation

2. Sentence structure

1. Basic sentence structure
2. Extended sentence structure

2.1. Basic sentence structure

- SVO structure

Subject	Verb	(Object)
Nkuma	eats	apples.
Cady	plays	football.
Karim	sleeps.	

2.2. Extended sentence structure

Subject	Verb	(Object)	(Place)	(Time)
Nkuma	eats	apples	-	every day.
Cady	plays	football	outside.	-
Karim	sleeps	-	at home	on Mondays.

3. Clause

- a group of words containing both a subject and a verb

Subj. + Verb = Clause

3.1. If there is no clause?

- **It's not a sentence, it's a fragment.**
 - In the building at night.
 - Every week.
 - At the restaurant.

3.2. If one clause element is missing?

- **It's not a sentence, it's a fragment.**
 - Food at the restaurant.
 - I a student.
 - Have learned a lot today.

3.3. Clause types

1. Independent (main)
2. Dependent (subordinate)

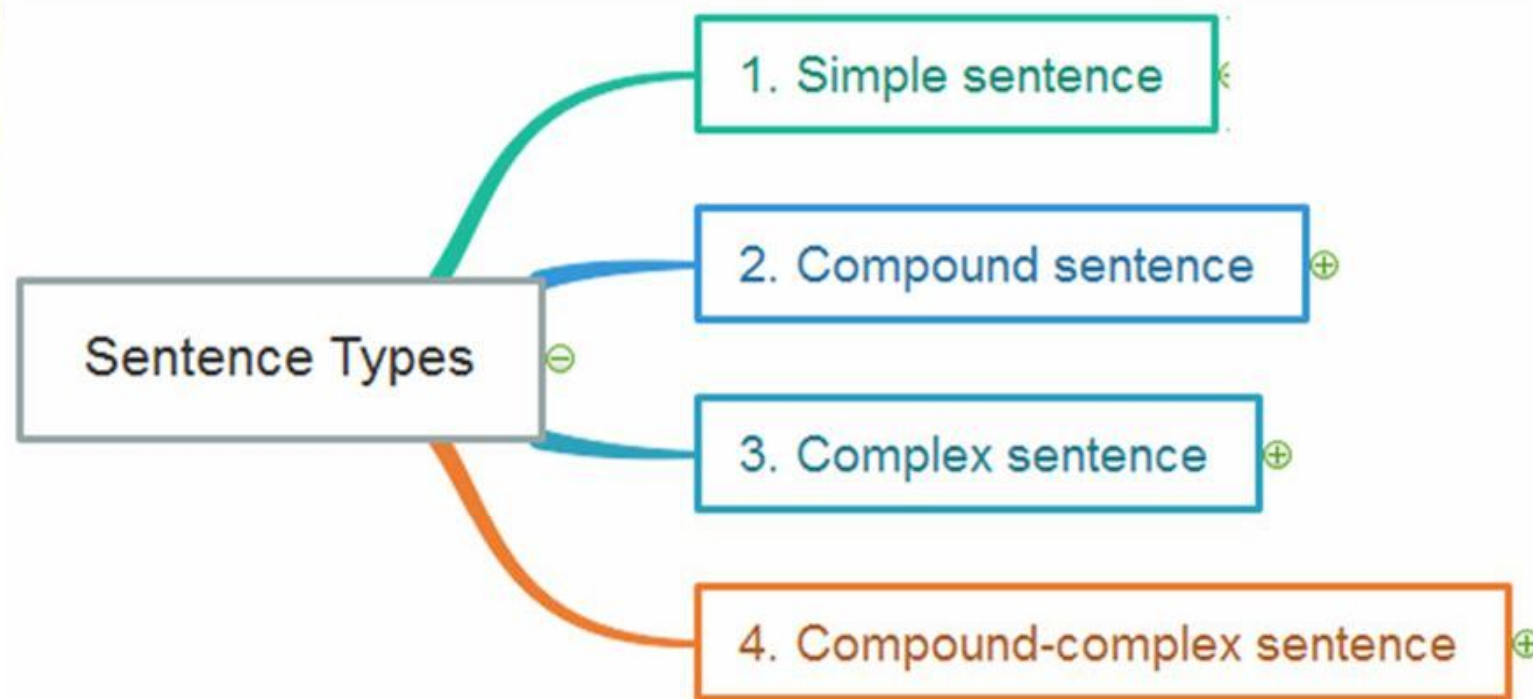
3.3.1. Independent clause

- Can stand alone as a sentence
 - I like pizza
 - He has read a lot of books

3.3.2. Dependent clause

- Incomplete meaning
- Must be attached to an independent clause
 - Although I like pizza...
 - ... because he has read a lot of books

4. Sentence types



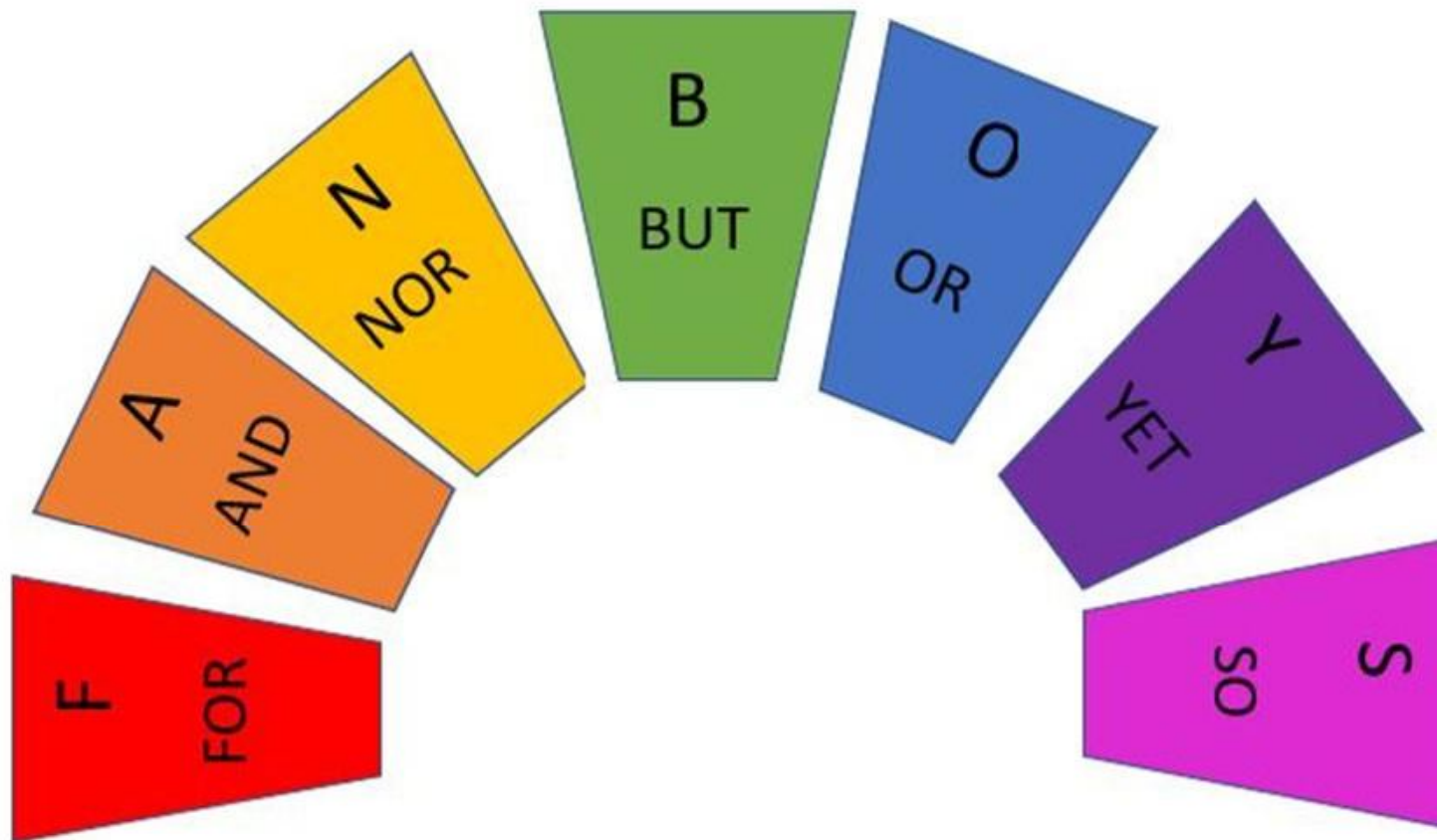
4.1. Simple sentence

- consists of one main (or independent) clause
 - A woman went to the gym.
 - The black rabbit died yesterday

4.2. Compound sentence

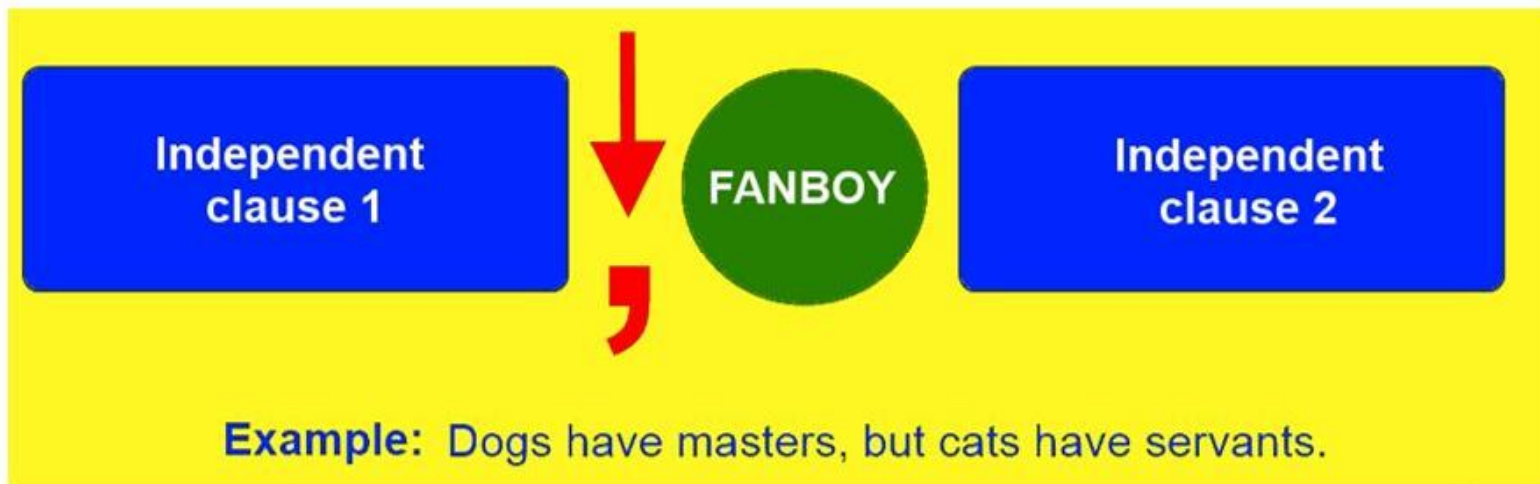
- has at least two independent clauses
- connected by **coordinating conjunctions** (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*)
 - A woman **went** to the gym, **and** everybody **liked** her immediately.
 - The black rabbit **died** yesterday, **so** we **have bought** a white elephant today.

4.2.1. Coordinating conjunctions



4.2.2. Punctuation in a compound sentence

- Separate clauses by a COMMA



4.3. Complex sentence

- has at least one independent clause and one dependent clause
- connected by **subordinating conjunctions** (*though, when, because, etc.*)
 - The woman **went** to the gym **because** she **wanted to get fit**.
 - Black rabbits **die** **whenever** we **stop feeding** them.

4.3.1. Subordinating conjunctions



SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Comparison

than
whether
whereas
rather than
as much as

Time

until
after
now that
whenever
as soon as

Concession

though
although
even though

Relative Pronouns

who
whom
whose
whoever
whomever

Reason

as
to
since
so that
because

Condition

if
only if
unless
provided that
assuming that

Place

where
wherever

Relative Adjectives

that
which
whatever
whichever

Manner

how
as if
as though

4.3.2. Punctuation in a complex sentence

- No COMMA

Independent
clause

I SAW A
WABUB

Dependent
clause

Example:

A cannibal does not eat clowns because they taste funny.

4.3.2. Punctuation in a complex sentence

- Use COMMA



4.4. Compound-complex sentences

- Consists of at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.
 - Rezeda Beisheva completed her literature review, but she still needs to work on her methods section even though she finished her methods course last semester.
 - Although he organized his sources by theme, Mongo decided to arrange them chronologically, and he carefully followed the MEAL plan for organization.

Warning!!!

- Use compound-complex sentences carefully - they will generally make your text less readable.

References

- <https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/grammar/sentencestructure>
- <https://guides.lib.uoguelph.ca/Grammar/SentenceStructure>
- Douglas, J. (2015). The reader's brain: How neuroscience can make you a better writer. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.