

SENTENCE STRUCTURE: answer key

TASK 1A: Compare Paragraphs A, B and C below. What are the main differences between them? Which is the best? Why?

Paragraph A consists of 13 simple sentences (sentences consisting of a single independent clause). The effect of this is that the paragraph reads choppy/like a list.

Paragraph B consists of only 3 sentences. The middle sentence (from Miescher's plan... to ... discovered a new substance) in particular (which in paragraph 3 is divided up into 3 separate sentences) is too long, reads like a runaway train, leaves the reader gasping for breath, needs to be broken down into more digestible bite-size portions. The writer has been focusing too heavily on 'getting the information down on paper' and has failed to consider the impact of his/her writing on the reader.

Paragraph C features a mix of simple, complex, and compound-complex sentences (total: 6; the very long middle sentence in paragraph B has been broken down into 3 separate sentences); there are no compound sentences. The paragraph reads fluidly and coherently, showcasing high level writing skill. Varying sentence types is one important way of achieving coherence within a text and achieving a good level of readability. (content+good writing = authority and credibility).

TASK 2: In the above complex and compound-complex sentences underline the dependent clauses, wavy underline the independent clauses, and circle the coordinators, subordinators and conjunctive adverbs.

COMPLEX (one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses)

- Computers have come a long way since they first came on the market. (dependent adverb clause)
- Although she was unsure of the answer, she tried to make an intelligent guess. (dependent adverb clause)
- Scientists don't know what causes multiple sclerosis. (dependent noun clause)
- The government is saying that more people are in work than ever before. (dependent noun clause)
- He was like a cock who thought [that] the sun had risen to hear him crow. (dependent adjective clause+dependent noun clause)
- The only other known virus that was of similar size and shape was Marburg virus. (dependent adjective clause)
- A 3D printer is a machine which can make three dimensional solid objects from a digital file. (dependent adjective clause).

COMPOUND-COMPLEX (two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses)

- Because the grammar was easy, I learned the language quickly, but it took me several years to master writing.
- After I stopped paying my bills, the bank repossessed my car, and the phone company cut off my service.
- Similarities between languages have led some researchers to speculate that something inherent in the human brain is biologically responsible for language; consequently, their research focuses on the language acquisition of children for clues.
- Since insects are exothermic, they must rely on the environment as their body's heat source, and without this external heat source, they would not be able to move, forage, mate, or function properly.

- Mistrust of aid workers, particularly those from the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders, is facilitating the spread of Ebola; **in addition, since** this is the first outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, many inhabitants are not familiar **with** how Ebola spreads. (*dependent noun clause object of preposition 'with'*)
- All too often arguments for organic and against GM foods are not based on scientific evidence; they merely preach consumption of 'natural' products, **as though** this gives them some special power or desirability.

TASK 3: Examine the following paragraph and identify the different sentence types (simple, compound, complex and compound-complex). Circle the coordinators, subordinators and conjunctive adverbs.

Simple	As a result, the search for energy derived from alternative sources — including geothermal, nuclear, solar, wind, and hydroelectric technologies — has taken on enormous importance in political and scientific circles. The next twenty years may well bring a massive reinvention of the world's approach to energy.
Compound	There are no compound sentences in this paragraph.
Complex	Nearly every country in the world today concedes that the age of sourcing energy from fossil fuels — chiefly crude oil and coal — is waning. (<i>dependent noun clause functions as object of verb concede</i>) Many other nations, including the United States and China, are still largely fossil-fuel based, but are awakening to the need to make national-level investments in alternative energy innovations that could transform their economies in the near future. (<i>one subject + 2 verbs: many other nations are + are awakening</i>)
Compound-complex	Not only is there a finite amount of fossil fuel reserves in the Earth, but the environmental (and even political) cost of using these reserves is higher <u>than most countries are willing to bear</u> . (<i>compound sentence using coordinating conjunctions 'not only, but ...' and emphatic use of inversion + dependent noun clause</i>) Some countries have made significant strides toward converting their energy bases from fossil fuels to renewable energies; for example, Denmark, which supplied more than 95% of its national energy from fossil fuels in the early 1970s, now supplies more than 30% from wind and other renewable sources.

TASK 4: Analyse the article 'Why do mosquitos bite humans?' for distribution of simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences. Which of the four sentence types is most frequent? Which is least frequent?

Paragraph 1

1. The mosquito *Aedes aegypti*, **which** preys on humans in tropical and subtropical regions, is the main vector for dengue and yellow fever. (*complex sentence with dependent adjective clause*)
2. In a recent *Nature* paper, a team of researchers have uncovered a gene **that** enables these mosquitoes to target humans. (*complex sentence with dependent adjective clause*)

Paragraph 2

1. To track down the gene, the researchers took advantage of the fact that not all *Ae. aegypti* prefer to bite humans. (*simple sentence*)
2. The species originated in the forests of sub-Saharan Africa, **where** it fed on non-human animals. (*complex sentence with dependent adverb clause*)
3. In East Africa, the black-coloured subspecies *Ae. aegypti formosus* avoids coming into homes, preferring to stay in the forests, **where** it lays its eggs in rock pools and preys on non-human animals. (*complex sentence with dependent adverb clause*)
4. The brown-coloured *Ae. aegypti aegypti*, **on the other hand**, readily comes into homes and bites humans, and has adapted to starvation in its larval stage, **since** the eggs are laid in water found in indoor containers, **which** is often nutrient-poor. (*complex sentence with 1 independent + 2 dependent clauses, one adverbial, one adjectival; the independent clause has a compound verb: comes, bites, has adapted;*)
5. By comparing the behaviour and genetics of the two subspecies, forest and domestic, the researchers hoped to figure out why one prefers humans. (*simple sentence*)

Paragraph 3

1. They started by testing **how** the two subspecies responded to nylon sleeves **which** had been worn by humans or guinea-pigs. (*complex sentence with 1 independent clause, 1 dependent noun clause and 1 dependent adjective clause*)
2. The experiment confirmed the difference in taste; the domestic subspecies showed a preference for the human-scented sleeve, while the forest subspecies was indifferent. (*compound-complex sentence with 2 independent clauses and 1 dependent adverb clause*)
3. Mosquitoes smell with their antennae, **so** the team reasoned **that** there might be an important difference in gene expression in the antennae. (*complex sentence with dependent noun clause*)
4. They could use RNA sequencing to get a snapshot of gene expression in the antennae, **but** comparing the two subspecies generated a list of nearly 1,000 genes, including many involved in other process — **after all**, the forest and domestic forms differ in more than just their prey preference. (*compound sentence with 3 independent clauses, notice alternative punctuation in third clause ‘...process – after all, the forest ...’ RATHER THAN ‘... process; after all, the forest...’*)
5. To tighten their search, the team crossed the two subspecies to make a hybrid pool and then picked out the hybrids **that** had a strong preference for humans or guinea-pigs. (*complex sentence with 1 independent clause [with compound verb] and 1 dependent adjective clause*)
6. Hybridizing the subspecies smoothed out the genetic differences between them, **so** the human and guinea-pig preferring hybrids were separated by differential expression of just 46 genes. (*compound sentence*)
7. The two lists — 1,000 genes and 46 genes — had an overlap of only 14 genes, **two of which** encoded odorant receptors. (*complex sentence with dependent adjective clause*)
8. The team focused their efforts on one of the two, called OR4. (*simple sentence*)

Paragraph 4

1. The next step was to figure out if and how OR4 responds to human odors. (*simple sentence*)
2. By cloning the gene into a *Drosophila* neuron, the researchers could test its response to different chemical cues in a controlled manner. (*simple sentence*)
3. OR4 didn't respond to the different components **that** make up a guinea-pig's smell, **but** it did respond when exposed to sulcatone, a chemical **which** is emitted at higher levels by humans than other animals. (*compound- complex sentence with 2 independent + 2 dependent adjective clauses*)
4. The malaria mosquito, *Anopheles gambiae*, also has several odorant receptor genes **that** respond strongly to sulcatone, **but** none of them is closely related to the *Ae. aegypti* OR4. (*complex sentence with 1 independent and 1 dependent clause*)
5. The two mosquito species, separated by 300 million years of evolution, have independently evolved a taste for this human marker. (*simple sentence*)

Paragraph 5

1. The team identified several alleles of *OR4* in *Ae. aegypti* populations. (*simple sentence*)
2. A preference for biting humans depends on having an allele **that is strongly expressed and is sensitive to** sulcatone. (*complex sentence with 1 independent + 1 dependent clause with compound verb*)
3. However, it seems that sulcatone alone may not be enough — guinea-pig odor with added sulcatone was no more attractive to human-biting mosquitos than guinea-pig odor alone. (*compound sentence*)
4. In addition, despite being an attractant at low levels, sulcatone acts as a mosquito repellent at sufficiently high concentrations. (*simple sentence*)
5. Sulcatone and *OR4* are clearly just part of a complex ecological and evolutionary interaction between mosquitos and their meals. (*simple sentence*)

Total sentences: 25

Total simple sentences: 9

Total compound sentences: 3

Total complex sentences: 11

Total compound-complex sentences: 2

This article includes a mix of sentence types, but many more simple and complex sentences than compound or compound-complex sentences.

How typical is this? Analyse other articles in the same way to find out more about typical distributions of different sentence types.