

CHAPTER

8 Types of Sentences

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Explain the functions of various types of sentences found in the English language;
2. Relate different types of sentences according to their suitable moods;
3. Differentiate between passive and active sentences; and
4. Identify common problem in constructing sentences.

INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, we learned about what a sentence comprises. In this chapter, we are going to explore the different kinds of sentences used in the English language. You will see that a sentence does many different things, depending on the “type” it is, which is why it is important that you are familiar with the divergent ways in which the English sentence are written and used.

The types of sentences in English we will be looking at in this chapter is shown in Figure 8.1.



Figure 8.1: Ten types of English sentences

Because there are many different types of sentences doing different things, it is not uncommon that users of English, even experienced ones, sometimes commit errors in constructing them.

In this chapter, we will also learn about some of the most common errors in sentence construction and the ways to correct them.

8.1**SENTENCE TYPES: SIMPLE, COMPOUND, COMPLEX,
COMPOUND-COMPLEX****8.1.1 Simple Sentence**

The simple sentence consists of one main clause (see last chapter); it has one subject and one predicate, but may contain modifiers.

Example:

My English class is extremely boring.

Subject

My English class

Predicate

boring

Modifier

extremely

8.1.2**Compound Sentence**

Compound sentences are composed of two or more main clauses of equal importance. They are joined by a conjunction or a semicolon.

Examples:

Jamal is the King and Rani is the Queen.



The mountain is cooling; the valley is warm.



8.1.3 Complex Sentence

A complex sentence includes one main clause and one or more subordinate clauses.

Examples:

After cleaning his room and painting the gate, Andrew was very tired.



Jayanthi must study hard if she wants to enter a medical school.



The house, old and unoccupied, was sold for only RM20,000.

Here are some simple rules to remember:

1. If the dominant clause is followed by the subordinate clause or clauses (joined by a conjunction, as in example 2 above), no punctuation is necessary.
2. If the subordinate clause or clauses comes before the dominant clause, separate the subordinate clause(s) from the dominant one with a comma (example 1).
3. Unlike the first two examples, where the subordinate clause provides information essential to the sentence, the information provided by the subordinate clause is inessential to example 3. The extra information is just to add depth to the sentence, and is usually placed midway in the sentence and marked off with commas.

8.1.4**Compound-Complex Sentence**

A compound-complex sentence combines features of the compound and the complex sentences together. That is, it contains two or more main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses.

Examples:

Rahman likes noise while Suryani likes silence, which makes me wonder how they got married in the first place.



For years, nobody has entered the old house, but everyone in the village knew that the house was haunted.



Identify each sentence below. Beside each sentence, mark **S** for simple sentence, **CD** for compound, **CX** for complex, or **CD-CX** for compound-complex.

1. Shake the carton well, but don't spill the milk.
2. The message that the survivor sent was hard to read, and help was slow in arriving.
3. The garden flourished, with hibiscus and orchids towering above the azaleas, roses, and colorful flowers.
4. At the end of the concert, audience members jumped to their feet to dance, and enthusiastic applause broke out.
5. As the rain continued to pour, the harvests became threatened.
6. The guide who escorted our group spoke three languages, so we had no problems.

7. The Penghulu chose the best people whom he could find for the committee; Salmah was appointed treasurer.
8. The shopping mall has a store that sells nothing but socks.
9. The most expensive of the gifts was wrapped in newspaper.
10. People who expect special treatment are often disappointed.
11. Kathy had planned to revise for the test this morning, but she overslept.
12. What we learned about Indonesia made us eager to visit that country, but if we don't save money, the trip will not come soon.
13. The family planned outdoor activities for the entire holiday; however, bad weather interfered with the plans.
14. Every summer my cousins and uncle go for a hiking trip in Cameron Highlands.
15. One evening, Chandran was driving in a moonless night, and he took a shortcut past the cemetery.
16. When he saw a young woman walking slowly along in the dark, he pulled over to offer her a ride.
17. A cold, dry wind entered the car together with the young woman.
18. The hitchhiker rode silently until the car reached the boundary of the cemetery, and there she disappeared.
19. Aaron, terrified and confused, vowed never to drive past the cemetery again, or to offer a ride to someone in the middle of a moonless night.



For more exercises, visit the following websites:

<http://www.esc.edu/htmlpages/writerold/pandg/exg10a.shtml>

<http://eslbee.com/cgi-bin/quiztest.cgi?helenkeller>

<http://eslbee.com/cgi-bin/quiztest.cgi?simplecompoundorcomplex>

8.2**SENTENCE TYPES: DECLARATIVE, INTERROGATIVE, IMPERATIVE, EXCLAMATORY****8.2.1****Declarative Sentence**

A declarative sentence is a sentence in the form of a statement, and is used to convey information. Most sentences that we form everyday are declarative. They end with a full stop/period.

For example:



Mr. Alan is a Science teacher.



I'm reading my third book this week.



He switched off the lights because he wanted to take a nap.

8.2.2**Interrogative Sentence**

An interrogative sentence is a sentence in the form of a question. A question mark appears at the end of such a sentence. There are four types of interrogative sentences:

(a) Simple Interrogative Sentence

This sentence requires a simple yes/no as answer.



Are you ill?



Is her family accompanying her to the hospital?

(b) Alternative Interrogative Sentence

This sentence offers two or more responses.



Are you going to the game or home now?



Do you prefer tea, coffee or milk?

(c) WH-Interrogative Sentence

WH-interrogative sentence is introduced by a wh-word, and it sometimes elicits an open-ended response.

What is her name?

What happened?

(d) Questions

Questions are sometimes tagged onto the end of a declarative sentence.

For example:

Rashad plays the trumpet, **doesn't he?**



 We've forgotten to buy rice, **haven't we?**

There's a good show on TV tonight, **isn't there?**



8.2.3 Imperative Sentence

Imperative sentences are used in issuing orders or directives.

For example:



Please be quiet in the library.

Give me your mobile phone number.



Don't close the window.

You may also add a tag question at the end of imperatives.

For example:

Give me your mobile phone number, **will you?**



Write soon, **won't you?**

8.2.4 Exclamatory Sentence

Exclamatory sentences are used to make exclamatory remarks, such as:

What an idiotic show that was!





How lucky you are!

Note that an exclamation mark comes at the end of the sentence.



On the line, identify each sentence below by writing **D** for declarative, **INT** for interrogative, **IMP** for imperative, or **E** for exclamatory. Add the proper punctuation mark at the end of each sentence.

1. Sheila Majid is a Malaysian singer.
2. Did you know she sang a duet with Nora entitled Jentayu.
3. What a beautiful song that was.
4. Try to name another Malaysian singer.
5. Have you ever heard of Jaclyn Victor.
6. She was the winner of the first Malaysian Idol contest.
7. What an excellent voice she has.
8. Do you know the internationally known Malaysian singer, Michael Wong.
9. Find out the names of three of his songs.
10. Would you like to be an inventor someday.



For more exercises, visit the following websites:

<http://www.worksheetworks.com/english/partsofspeech/sentences/identify-types.html>

8.3 MOODS

Related to the above section, different sentence types also reflect different moods. Declarative sentences would reflect a *declarative mood* (stating a view, making a statement); interrogative sentences express an *interrogative mood* (asking a question); and imperative sentences express an *imperative mood* (an order, a command).

There is another mood known as the *subjunctive mood* which has all but almost past out of use in the English language, and are used only in very rare and specific situations.

Here is Fadzilah Amin's (a well known language teacher and columnist) explanation of the subjunctive mood taken from The Star "What is this mood all about".



The subjunctive mood is used to express hopes, wishes, suggestions, recommendations, and what is imagined rather than what really exists.

A verb in the subjunctive mood doesn't have to agree with the subject of the clause it is in. The present subjunctive always takes the base form of the verb, no matter what the tense of the first verb is. Here are some examples:

- (a) **"He suggested that I apply for another scholarship."**
Here, the subordinate clause beginning with "that" uses the base form of the verb "apply" even though the first verb is in the past tense, i.e. "suggested".
- (b) **"The committee recommends that she be promoted at once to a higher grade."**
Here, the "that-" clause also uses the base form of the verb "be" instead of "is", which one would normally use after "she".
- (c) **"God save the King!" expresses best wishes for the King and means "May God save the King!".**
Here, the base form of the verb "save" is used instead of "saves" which agrees with "God".

In expressing an unlikely possibility, the past subjunctive is used, in which a past tense verb is used to express what is imagined or wished, and also unlikely possibilities. Here are some examples:

- (a) **"If they made me a king, I'd still be a slave to you."**
This is a line from an old song, where the past subjunctive also corresponds to the second conditional.

- (b) "Imagine that you had won a lottery."
- (c) "This hungry orphan in Africa could be your child; so please help him."
- (d) "If I were a millionaire ..."
Here the plural form "were" is used instead of "was" which we would normally use with "I". This unusual usage is only confined to the "be" verb.
- (e) "If she were to give me one of her many cars, I wouldn't refuse!"

Source: "What is this mood all about" (*The STAR*, 6 Dec. 2007)

8.4**PASSIVE AND ACTIVE SENTENCES****8.4.1****Passive Sentence**

In a sentence written in the passive voice (passive sentence), the subject receives the action expressed in the verb; the subject is acted upon.

The agent performing the action may appear in a “by the...” phrase or may be omitted. Look at the following examples:



The girl was bitten by a snake.

The girl is the subject; she receives the verb bitten.



Mr. Reynolds, the millionaire, was poisoned by his fourth wife.



The results of the experiment will be presented by Dr. Low at the conference.

How do you recognise a passive sentence from an active one? You can recognise passive voice expressions because the verb phrase will always include an auxiliary (*am, is, was, were, are, or been*). The presence of this auxiliary verb, however, does not necessarily mean that the sentence is passive.

Another way to recognise passive sentences is that they may include a “by the...” phrase after the verb; the agent performing the action, if named, is the object of the preposition in this phrase.

Active sentences are shorter and more expressive when compared to passive sentences. In fact, if you use too many passive sentences in writing, your piece may sound a little flat and boring. Active sentences are also easier to understand because they are more direct and flows naturally.

Consider the following two pairs of sentences below:

Active

At the concert, each performer sang a favourite song requested by the audience.


Passive

At the concert, a favourite song requested by the audience was sang by each of the performer.


Active

The moving team will clear the furniture on floors four and five in the building by 5pm tomorrow.

Passive

The furniture on floors four and five in the building will be cleared by the moving team by 5pm tomorrow.

8.4.2 Active Sentence

In an active sentence (or active voice), the subject of the sentence performs the action denoted by the verb. Look at the following examples:



Hamad is eating a pie at the restaurant.

(Hamad is the subject; he is performing the verb eating)



Kalyani is throwing her brother a birthday party.

(Kalyani is the subject; she is performing the verb throwing)



The old woman lives in the shoe.

(The old woman is the subject; she is performing the verb live)

8.4.3**Changing Passive Sentences to Active Sentences**

But to make your essay interesting, it is sometimes a good idea to vary your sentence construction. As such, using passive sentences every once in a while can be a helpful thing. Also, there are some kinds of writings which require that you use the passive voice predominantly. In scientific writings for example, because personal nouns and pronouns are avoided, it is often the case that sentences will appear in the passive form. Here are two instances in which passive voice sentences are privileged over active ones.

- (a) The doer of the action is unknown, unwanted, or unneeded in the sentence.

Example:

The decision has been finalised.

It is often the case that heroes are not appreciated until it is too late.



- (b) The writer wishes to emphasise the action of the sentence rather than the doer of the action.

Example:

The world record for running the longest distance was broken last week by a Malaysian.

The suspect was questioned for ten hours by the investigators.



Here are three simple steps to remember when you want to change a passive voice sentence to an active one:

 1

Move the passive sentence's subject into the active sentence's direct object slot.

 Passive Voice

The letter was mailed by ...

 Active Voice

... mailed the letter

 2

Remove the auxiliary verb **be** from the main verb and change main verb's form if needed.

 Passive Voice

The letter **was** mailed
by ...

 Active Voice

... **mailed** the letter.

3

Place the passive sentence's object or the preposition **by** into the subject slot.

Passive Voice

... mailed by **John**

Active Voice

John mailed ...

From the example above, you will have:

Passive Voice

The letter was mailed by
John.

to

Active Voice

John mailed the letter.

Do the reverse if you want to change an active voice sentence to a passive voice sentence.



Change each passive voice sentence below into the active form.

1. The winning entry was chosen by a panel of award winning novelists.
2. Two persons were injured in a fire over the last weekend.
3. The purple dress was never sent to the cleaners by her brother.
4. A bullet travelling at incredible speed was shot by the hunter.
5. The dishes were quickly cleared from the table by the efficient waiter.
6. European breeds of horses are bred by that gentleman who lives in a large farm.

7. They were mesmerised by the singer's beautiful voice.
8. Adequate medical benefits should be given by the organisation to every employee.
9. A decision was made to buy the land by three committee members.
10. A memo was written on the white pad by his secretary.
11. The famous singer was constantly chased by reporters.
12. My brother's car has been stolen from our front porch by the same syndicate.
13. A trip to Disneyland was won by my father.
14. We were all surprised by the teacher's strange behavior.
15. A full tuition scholarship is awarded to all good students by the university each year.



Decide if the sentences below are in the active or passive voice.

1. Margaret and I are listening to the radio.
2. Grandmother is reading a letter.
3. The letter was sent by Gopal through registered post.
4. Uncle Beng has lived in Brunei since 1984.
5. Kareena was married to Nathan last year.
6. The supermarket was opened by a rich man to service the small town.
7. The rich man bought a large piece of land last year from the government.
8. Many imported items are sold at the supermarket.
9. My mother visits the supermarket every week to buy groceries.
10. Mathematics and Science are taught by Mr. Smith in my school.

8.5**COMMON PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN CONSTRUCTING SENTENCES**

In this section, we will look at some of the most common problems often encountered by students of the English language. Be sure to do the exercises to reinforce your understanding.

8.5.1**Run-On Sentence and Comma Splice**

This problem usually occurs when two independent clauses are not properly connected, resulting in a sentence that is messy. In most cases, it is because the students uses a comma to divide two independent clauses (this problem is known as comma splice).

For example:

The house is very elegant, the kitchen is ugly.

You've done well, you failed.

Note that a run-on sentence has nothing to do with the length of the sentence, although very long sentences are usually where this problem occurs. In the case of the above sentences, they can be corrected by introducing a conjunction after the comma.

For example:



The house is very elegant, **but** the kitchen is ugly.

You've done well, **even though** you failed.



Run-on sentences and comma splice occur most often when the two clauses are connected by a conjunctive adverb such as *however*; *moreover*; *nevertheless*, etc.

Look at the following sentences:

The ship sank, however, John managed to swim to safety.

The man lost all his money, moreover, his house was destroyed by a fire.

To correct these sentence, either replace the first comma with a semi-colon, or replace the first comma with a full-stop and capitalise the first letter of the conjunctive adverb:



The ship sank; **however**, John managed to swim to safety.



The man lost all his money. **Moreover**, his house was destroyed by a fire.



ACTIVITY

Correct the following run-on sentences and comma splices.

1. Dorothy saved for many years, she still cannot afford to buy a house.
2. They were late for dinner, however, they were on time for dessert.
3. Judy leads a healthy life she is always exercising and swimming.
4. The show begins at 7:30 make sure you're there early.
5. Mahmud knows his way around the village this is something he could always depend on.
6. Kimberly sat in the audience and clapped, Tom watched her as he sang the finale.
7. The panther jumped from step to step, it gracefully landed with each jump.
8. The teacher mentioned that she especially likes well-researched essays, moreover, she says that these essays reflect the students' interest.
9. Maniam did not agree with the manager's decision, he went to see the Chairperson of the company.
10. I learned the song from my mother, however, I chose to never sing it.

8.5.2

Sentence Fragments

A fragment is an incomplete sentence. This happens because of one of the following situations:

(a) When part of a sentence is disconnected from the main clause.

For example:

My university offers many degrees. Such as Business, Engineering and Arts.

Mr. Tan passed away yesterday. Leaving behind his wife and two children.

I need to find a new job. Because the one I have currently isn't working out.

To correct such fragments, simply remove the period/full stop between sentence, and replace it with a comma (remember to uncap the first letter of the word after the

My university offers many degrees, such as Business, Engineering and Arts.



Mr. Tan passed away yesterday, leaving behind his wife and two children.

I need to find a new job, because the one I have currently isn't working out.



(b) When a sentence is missing a main verb.

For example:

A film that is frightening yet entertaining.

Children of all races playing in the park.

A string of straight A's the day she started school.

There are many ways to correct these errors. Usually, the best way is to introduce a direct object before the sentence. For example:

He watched a movie that is frightening yet entertaining.





We saw children of all races playing in the park.

Wendy has been scoring a string of straight A's the day she started school.



Other ways in which you can correct these fragments are as follows:

(i) Introduce an appositive

Dracula, a story that is frightening yet entertaining, will be screened in the cinemas next week.

(ii) Introduce a verb into the sentence

Children of all races are playing in the park.

A string of straight A's began the day she started school.

(c) When the sentence has no subject

For example:

For working three jobs while studying caused Howard to fail his exams.

By paying too much attention to work can cause a person to neglect his family and health.

To correct such fragments, simply remove the preposition at the beginning of the sentence:



Working three jobs while studying caused Howard to fail his exams.

Paying too much attention to work can cause a person to neglect his family and health.





For each sentence pair, select the one which is a sentence fragment, and make the necessary corrections.

1. (a) Finding a parking space at the mall is easier during the week day.
(b) Driving in the city during the morning rush hour.
2. (a) To apply for a new job at the bookshop in the mall.
(b) Meeting his new colleagues on his first day, Ray knew he will enjoy working there.
3. (a) By the time Tom found out how expensive the present will be.
(b) After taking her driving exams five times, Melissa finally got her license.
4. (a) Who came to up to Mary to wish her “happy birthday”.
(b) That little girl looks out of place among her older peers.
5. (a) While waiting for her friend to finish shopping.
(b) To avoid bumping into Lisa on the way home, Rahman took a different route.
6. (a) Because Sara was certain that she had seen the strange woman before.
(b) Since Dora is sick, I am representing her at the fund raising event.
7. (a) My family has owned that large home since 1914.
(b) Many of his friends coming to see him since became very rich.
8. (a) His business been so busy now he has little time for other things.
(b) By the time everyone has finished their food, the show was already over.

8.5.3 Misplaced, Squinting and “Dangling” Modifiers

We learned in a previous chapter that a modifier provides us with more information about the subject or object closest to it. So, if we misplace a modifier, the meaning we want to convey in a sentence may become vague or confused.

Modifiers, we have learned, can be a single word, a clause or a phrase.

(a) Misplaced Words

For single word modifiers, the general rule is to place it near the word or words they modify, especially when a reader might think that they are modifying something else in the sentence. Consider the following sentence:

After taking lessons for a year, I could understand the language spoken by my friends **easily**.

It is not clear from the sentence if I could understand the language easily, or if my friends spoke it easily. To eliminate this confusion, change the position of the modifier.

After taking lessons for a year, I could **easily** understand the language spoken by my friends.



You must especially be careful about the position of limiting modifiers in a sentence. These are words like almost, hardly, nearly, just, only, barely, merely, etc. These modifiers are the most commonly misplaced in sentences. You can accidentally change the entire meaning of a sentence if you place these modifiers next to the wrong word.

Look at the following examples:



I **almost** ate all the cake at the party last night (but my wife stopped me).



I ate **almost** all the cake at the party last night (and this morning I have put on 5 kgs).

(b) Misplaced Phrases or Clauses

As with single word modifiers, place the modifying phrase or clause as close as possible to the word/words it modifies. Consider the following examples:

The young girl was walking the dog *in a short skirt*.

The dog was chasing the boy *with the spiked collar*.

By mistake, he poked Marla with his finger *in the eye*.

In the first sentence, it is the girl who is wearing a short skirt, not the dog; in the second sentence, it is obvious that the dog is wearing the spiked collar, not the boy. And we certainly do not find fingers inside our eyes! Hence, all three sentences have misplaced modifiers. Remember the rule: place the modifying phrase or clause as close as you can to the word or words it is modifying. The correct sentences should read:

The young girl **in a short skirt** was walking the dog.





The dog **with the spiked collar** was chasing the boy.



By mistake, he poked Marla **in the eye** with his finger.

(c) Squinting Modifiers

A squinting modifier is a modifier that can modify either the word or words before it or the word or words after it. When this happens, it becomes unclear which word/words the modifier is modifying. For example:

Telling your side of the story *clearly* helps with our investigation.

Students who seek their teacher's advice *often* improve in their grades.

It is uncertain what the modifiers are modifying in these two sentences. In the first one, does telling your side of the “story clearly” helps, or does telling your side of the story “clearly helps” with our investigation? In the second one, is often modifying the student’s grade improvement or the seeking of the teacher’s advice? You can correct this problem in the following ways:

Telling your side of the story **will clearly** help with our investigation.



Students who **often** seek their teacher's advice improve their grades.

(d) Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier is often located at the start of a sentence. A dangling modifier is usually a phrase or an elliptical clause (a dependent clause whose subject and verb are implied rather than stated) that functions as an adjective but does not modify any specific word or words in the sentence, or modifies the wrong word or words.

Consider the following example:

Raised in a village, it is normal to miss the smell of fresh air.



This adjectival phrase looks as if it is supposed to modify someone, but no one is mentioned in the sentence. The first main noun or pronoun will therefore be the target of modification, which, in the case of this phrase, is “it”. But this is illogical because “it” was not raised in a village.

To correct this, you should introduce a main subject which will be modified by adjectival phrase “raised in a village”. Here are some suggestions:

For a person raised in the village, it is natural to miss the smell of fresh air.

Raised in the village, I often miss the smell of fresh air.

Raised in the village, it is natural for me to miss the smell of fresh air.

A dangling modifier can also appear when you place an elliptical clause improperly:

Although nearing the end, we left early because we already knew what will happen.

Because of the way this sentence is structured, “Although nearing the end” seems to be (illogically) modifying “we”, which is the pronoun directly following the clause. An easy way to correct this is to reintroduce into the sentence the subject and verb that are implied in the elliptical clause:

Although **the movie** was nearing the end, we left early because we already knew what will happen.





Correct the sentences that have problems with modifiers. There is one sentence with no error at all.

1. The man stalked the zebras moving slowly.
2. Sarah was last seen wearing a wig with a black bag.
3. Computers have almost revolutionized the world so that everyone owns one now.
4. I had fallen barely asleep when I heard the dogs barking.
5. After working for the company for three years, it was surprising to learn that its founder was a 15 year old boy.
6. Bala wants to really do well in the final exams so that he can make his parents proud.
7. Although tired, everything was so cheap that we shopped until midnight.
8. Piled up next to the washer, I began doing the dishes.
9. Until he saw the house, he could not believe how large it was.
10. Listening to music sometimes helps me overcome loneliness.
11. To be considered by the top firms, your resume must look professional.

8.5.4

Restrictive and Non-Restrictive Elements

A clause can either be restrictive or non-restrictive, and users of English are sometimes confused as to which should be used. Two important rules to remember are these:



A restrictive clause is a clause that **is essential to the principle meaning of the sentence**. Without it, the sentence's meaning will be incomplete or obscured.



A non-restrictive clause is a clause that **is not essential to the principle meaning of the sentence**. Even without it, the meaning of the sentence is still clear and complete.

Restrictive and non-restrictive clauses are usually introduced by the relative pronouns which, that and who.

(a) That and Which

We use that to introduce a restrictive clause and which (followed by a comma) to introduce a non-restrictive clause.

Consider the following examples:



1 **Restrictive:**

You can borrow the books that is in the library.



2 **Non-Restrictive:**

You can borrow the books, which is in the library.



- In the first sentence, it suggests that there are many other books lying all around the house, but you can only borrow the ones that are in the library.
- In the second sentence, books are only to be found in the library and therefore you must go there to borrow them.



Can you explain the difference between the two sentences below?

- The children can eat the cakes that are in the pantry.
- The children can eat the cakes, which are in the pantry.

Remember our two important rules with regard to restrictive and non-restrictive clause?

Consider the following two examples:

1

The children must finish the food that is in the pantry.

**2**

The children must finish the food, which is in the pantry, by this evening.

- The first sentence is restrictive because “that is in the pantry” is essential to the principle meaning of the sentence. Without it, the sentence seems incomplete.
- In the second sentence, “which is in the pantry” is not essential to the principle meaning of the sentence (note also the placement of this clause between two commas to show that they are an “addition” to the sentence). Even without it, the sentence makes sense and is complete: The children must finish the food by this evening.

(b) Who

The relative pronoun who can either be restrictive or non-restrictive. If it is non-restrictive, it will be indicated by the presence of a comma.

Consider the following examples:

1

Restrictive:

The boys helped the women who have been hurt.

2

Non-Restrictive:*The boys helped the women, who have been hurt.*

- In the first sentence, only the women who have been hurt are given help. There are other women who have not been hurt.
- In the second sentence, all the women are receiving help because they are all hurt.

Going back to our two rules again, consider the following examples:

1

Restrictive:*My brother who lives in Phuket is a fisherman.*

2

Non-Restrictive:*My brother, who lives in Phuket, is a fisherman.*

- The first sentence suggests that I have more than one brother, and I have to specify that the one who lives in Kuantan is the fisherman.
- The second sentence suggests that I have only one brother, and the clause “who lives in Kuantan” is merely extra information. Even without it, my statement is clear and complete: *My brother is a fisherman.*

(c) Others

Restrictive and non-restrictive clauses are not always introduced by pronouns. Sometimes, the way in which a sentence is phrased and punctuated will suggest if the elements in the sentence are restrictive or non-restrictive.

For example:

1

My sister, Embun, is a tailor in Kuala Lumpur.

(Non-restrictive: I only have one sister, and her name is not essential to the sentence's principle meaning)

2

My sister Embun is a tailor in Kuala Lumpur.

(Restrictive: I have more than one sister, and I have to specify a name is essential to the sentence's principle meaning)



ACTIVITY

For each sentence below, decide if the clause in italics is restrictive or non-restrictive.

1. Humans are the only animals that have children on purpose with the exception of hamsters, who like to eat theirs.
2. Humans are the only animals that have children on purpose with the exception of hamsters, who like to eat theirs.
3. People who are arrogant because they are rich are like the Laplanders, who measure a man's worth by the number of his reindeer.
4. People who are arrogant because they are rich are like the Laplanders, who measure a man's worth by the number of his reindeer.
5. Every person has a novel in him or her, which is an excellent place for it.
6. I like to keep a bottle of antidote with me in case I see a snake, which I also keep with me.
7. The thing that impresses me the most about America is the way parents obey their children.
8. An idealist is one who, on noticing that perfume smells better than a cabbage, concludes that it will also make better soup.

(Adapted from "Grammar and Composition" at <http://grammar.about.com>)

8.5.5**Unclear Antecedents**

An antecedent of a pronoun is the noun that the pronoun replaces. Sometimes, a sentence becomes ambiguous because there are more than one antecedent which the pronoun could replace.

For example:

The laptop was in my car, but now it's gone.

(What is gone? The laptop or the car?)

A key difference between banking crises of today and of yesterday is that they have greater global impact.

(Which crises had more impact, today's or yesterday's?)

To correct this problem, remove the pronoun and re-introduce the antecedent into the sentence.

For example:



The laptop was in my car, but now the laptop is gone.

A key difference between banking crises of today and of yesterday is that the banking crises of today have greater global impact.



Finally, when the pronoun is placed too far away from the antecedent, especially in a very long sentence with several nouns, it becomes unclear what the antecedent is in the end.

For example:

Jolene saw Mary walking towards her. Rachel followed, and she began to feel worried.

(Who is she? Jolene, Mary or Rachel?).

To correct this, replace the pronoun with the rightful antecedent:

Jolene saw Mary walking towards her. Rachel followed and Jolene began to feel worried.



Always remember this simple rule:

A pronoun must have only one antecedent.



Fill in the correct pronoun in each sentence to reflect its antecedent.

1. During early rehearsals, an actor may forget _____ lines.
2. My school's football team is hardworking; _____ train even during the holidays.
3. A person needs to go for _____ medical checkup once or twice a year.
4. The members of the committee put _____ signatures on the document.
5. If any one of the students needs more paper, ask _____ to raise _____ hands.

6. When someone has been ill for a long time, _____ may lack enthusiasm in life.
7. If the jury fair, _____ will certainly acquit Rosham of the crime.
8. Neither the doctor nor the nurse provided _____ statement about the incident.
9. Each of the boys will receive _____ report card tomorrow.
10. Some of the silverware has lost _____ shine.

8.5.6 Lack of Agreement

(a) Between Pronoun and Antecedent.

Another problem relating to pronouns and their antecedents is a lack of agreement. We know that a pronoun refers to one antecedent, but sometimes they are incorrectly matched, causing the sentence to become unclear in its meaning.

In other words, the type of pronoun must be informed by its antecedent: a singular pronoun should replace a singular antecedent, a male pronoun should replace a male antecedent, etc.

Below are some examples:

I won't eat at that restaurant again because they serve maggot-infested vegetables.

(They should be replaced by it, because the pronoun is referring to a single restaurant.)

Every student must bring their own pens.

*(Every is singular, so the pronoun should also be singular:
Every student must bring his or her own pens.)*



Correct this sentence:

- Politics is interesting. They are my favourite subject in school.

(b) Between Noun and Verb.

In chapter two, we learned that a singular noun must take a singular verb, while a plural noun must take a plural verb. If there is a lack of agreement between the noun and the verb, the sentence will be incorrect (refer to Chapter 2).

Indefinite pronouns can be singular. They do not refer to any person or thing in particular but are used in a general way.

- Singular indefinite pronouns (e.g. someone, anyone, everyone, one, somebody, anybody, everybody and nobody) take a singular verb.
- Plural indefinite pronouns (e.g. both, few, many, others and several) take a plural verb.

The indefinite pronouns all, any, more, most, none, and some can be singular or plural, depending on how they are used.

Collective nouns can take either a singular or plural verb depending on how they are used. Please refer to Chapter 1 and 2 for detailed explanations.

8.5.7

Lack of Parallelism

It is commonly agreed amongst English language teachers that if there are several points in a sentence, they should all be stated in parallel structures to give balance to the sentence. This problem is often difficult to spot because it usually isn't a grammatical error, but has to do with the sentence sounding "correct".

Example 1:

Compare the two sentences below.

1

To eat a healthy breakfast and running for an hour everyday
keep Khairul healthy.

2

Eating a healthy breakfast and running for an hour everyday keep Khairul healthy.



Although there is nothing wrong with the first sentence, somehow, the second one sounds more “correct” because it sounds better.

Parallel structures are especially important when preparing bullet points to a premise.

Example 2:

By the end of this section, you will:

- Learn what parallel structures in sentences are;
- Identify sentences which do not use parallel structures; and
- Correct sentences that lacks parallelism.

Notice that in the two examples above, the parallel structures are announced by similarity in verb forms (eating and running in example one; learn, identify and correct in example two).



Ensure that each sentence below has a parallel structure.

1. The nurse took my temperature and blood pressure and was weighing me.
2. My teacher plays the piano, can sing, and she teaches music.
3. Last week, my wife ran away, my house caught fire, and I am out of a job.
4. The dog's size, how old it was, and its temperament made it an ideal pet.
5. The ball is rolling across the floor, bounced down the staircase, and went out the front door.

6. Leslie is very lazy and is the slowest, most boring person I have ever met. I'm feeling tired, cranky and I have an illness.
7. At the office, my jobs are clean the premise, the furniture is dusted, and deliveries are made.
8. The best way to stay healthy are to exercise, getting enough sleep, and the reduction of stress.
9. She has to get the children dressed, feed them and packed for school by 7:30am.

8.5.8 Inconsistent Use of Tenses or Pronouns

(a) Tense Consistency

Be consistent in your use of tenses in writing. If you are writing in the present tense, don't shift to the past tense (or vice versa) unless you have a good reason to do so.

For instance, in the examples below there is no reason to switch from the present tense.

In the novel, the protagonist **is** one of the few characters with whom I really sympathise. However, she **was** also morally suspicious in some ways as well.

She **intended** to represent the school for the upcoming competition, but then she **injures** her knees during practice.

To correct this problem, simply make the inconsistent tense consistent!

(b) Pronoun Consistency

In the same way with tense consistency, don't shift unnecessarily to a different pronoun from the one you are writing in. The examples below show sentences which are inconsistent in their pronoun use:

1

We have found that students who read widely have better general knowledge. You will also find that these students tend to be more proficient in their language as well.

2

Everyone immensely enjoys the tele-match. We don't have to like sports to get caught up in the crowd's enthusiasm and the atmosphere of fun.

To correct this problem, simply make the inconsistent pronouns consistent. In the case of the second sentence, the singular pronoun one can be used to replace we.

SUMMARY

- As most of what we write are composed of sentences, it is important that you know how to use the different types properly, and to use a variety of sentence types to make your writing more interesting and readable.
- Writing consistently in a single sentence type will make your writing flat and dull.
- Also, because the most common errors committed by users of English occur at the level of the sentence, you must be careful that you avoid making blatant mistakes in sentence constructions.
- This chapter has introduced some of the most common ones and has provided suggestions as to how you may correct them. Go through them again carefully.

KEY TERMS

Active Sentence	Interrogative Sentence
Antecedents	Non-Restrictive Clause
Complex Sentence	Passive Sentence
Compound Sentence	Restrictive Clause
Compound-Complex Sentence	Run-On Sentence
Dangling Modifiers	Sentence Fragments
Declarative Sentence	Simple Sentence
Exclamatory Sentence	Squinting Modifier
Imperative Sentence	Subjunctive Mood

REFERENCES

Chalker, Sylvia; Weiner, Edmund, ed. *The Oxford dictionary of English grammar*. Oxford University Press.

Kolln, Martha J.; Funk, Robert W. (2008). *Understanding English grammar* (8th Edition). Longman.

Strang, Barbara M. H. (1968) *Modern English structure* (2nd ed.). London: Arnold.