

Lesson Topic: Complex Sentences Overview

Objective

Students will be able to form complex sentences and use them to deliver additional information efficiently.

Lesson Outline

1. Objective
2. Introduction: Discuss simple vs. complex sentences
3. Introduction: Define a complex sentence
4. Introduction: Discuss parts of a complex sentence
5. Introduction: Review joining words
6. Individual Practice: Combine sentences
7. Individual Practice: Write about the purpose of complex sentences
8. Introduction: Discuss the purpose of complex sentences
9. Individual Practice: Write two complex sentences
10. Individual Practice: Write a complex sentence to show contrast
10. Wrap-Up

Optional Follow-up Activity

[Complex Sentences](#)

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.1.B

Choose among simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences to signal differing relationships among ideas.

Prerequisites

Students can write simple sentences and identify fragments.

Slide 1/11

By the end of class, you will be able to use joining words to add more information to a sentence.

Objectives

Introduce the objective for the lesson.

Say: Please read the objective for today's class silently.

Slide 2/11

How is the second sentence different from the first?

Van Gogh only sold one painting during his lifetime.

Though he is now considered one of our greatest artists, Van Gogh only sold one painting during his lifetime.

Introduction

Ask students to explain how the second sentence is different from the first.

Say: Look at the sentences on your screen. What are the differences between the first and second sentence?

Anticipated Student Response:

- The first sentence in each pair is a simple sentence, and the second one is longer.
- The second sentence in each pair explains more. It gives more information.
- The second sentences are all complex sentences.

Say: That's right. The first sentence is a simple sentence, and the second sentence is what's called a "complex sentence." Let's find out what that means.

Slide 3/11

A **complex sentence** is a simple sentence with extra information added to the beginning or the end.

Introduction

Ask students to read the explanation to themselves.

Say: Please read the explanation on your screen.

Slide 4/11

Simple sentence:

Van Gogh only sold one painting during his lifetime.

Complex sentence:

Though he is now considered one of our greatest artists, Van Gogh only sold one painting during his lifetime.

Introduction

Use the example sentence to discuss what makes a complex sentence.

Say: The sentence we looked at earlier is an example of a complex sentence. Let's look at it again. Read it to yourself.

Wait for students to finish reading the example.

Say: The underlined part is the added part. What do you notice about this added part? Could it stand on its own as sentences?

Anticipated Student Response:

- It looks like a fragment.
- It seems to have a subject and a verb.

Say: Sometimes the main part of the sentence is called an *independent clause*, and the added part is called a *dependent clause*. You don't have to know these terms, but you should understand this: the added part can't stand on its own as a complete sentence. It clearly needs to be joined with something else.

Slide 5/11

The added information in a complex sentence begins with a joining word

as, after, although, when, while, unless, until, because, before, if, since

Introduction

Explain that joining words are used to create complex sentences.

Say: Look at the list of words on your screen. These are the most common words that introduce the added information in a complex sentence. Let's practice using them to combine sentences.

Slide 6/11

Use a joining word to combine the sentences into one complex sentence.

I found out I'm allergic to peanuts.

I can't eat peanut butter sandwiches anymore.

Individual Practice

Ask students to combine the sentences.

Say: One of the purposes of using complex sentences is to create variety. As we've already discussed, if you write a few simple sentences in a row, it sounds "choppy" or immature. To avoid that, it's good to learn how to combine some of your simple sentences and form complex sentences.

Say: We're going to try this now. Take a look at your screens, and you'll see two simple sentences. They're so closely related, it would make sense to connect them.

Say: Use one of the joining words to combine the two sentences.

Discussion

Select 2-3 correct responses to display and discuss.

Lead a class discussion about the different ways to combine the sentences.

Discuss the following points:

- Either *since* or *because* can be used to show a causal relationship.
- The add-on part (*I found out I'm allergic to peanuts*) can be at the beginning or end of the sentence.

- It's important to try different ways of combining the sentences to see which method expresses the meaning most clearly.

If any students are unable to do this correctly, reassure them that they'll have more chances to practice writing complex sentences as the lesson continues.

Slide 7/11

What purpose do complex sentences serve? Use the examples below to come up with some ideas. Then type your response in the box.

- I can't go to the movies with you because I have to study.
- Before CDs were invented, we had to turn vinyl records over to hear the second side.

Individual Practice

Ask students to read the examples and answer the question on their own.

Say: There are two complex sentences on your screens right now. I'd like you to read them and think about what a complex sentence accomplishes. Why do we use them?

Instruct students to write at least one answer in the response box.

Discussion

Select 3-4 responses to display and discuss.

Anticipated student responses:

- They let you provide more information than you can in a simple sentence.
- They let you vary your sentences, so you don't write too many simple sentences in a row.

Point out any answers that are accurate and insightful. If no student makes the above observations, include them in your next comments.

Say: There's something else that I'd like to add to this list. Writing complex sentences encourages you to think in a more complex way.

Say: For example, if I start the add-on part with the words *after*, *before*, *while*, *when*, or *until*, what sort of information will I be providing?

Anticipated student response: You'll be saying *when* something happened.

Say: Good. What about the word *because*? If I start with that word, what kind of information will I be adding?

Anticipated student response: You'll be saying *why* something happened.

Say: Right. And that's important. Rather than just stating that something happened, sometimes it's good to offer your ideas about *why* it happened.

Say: One more example. If I begin the add-on part with *although*, what does that do?

Anticipated student response: It shows that you're going to say something that seems to contradict something else.

If no student responds, offer the following explanation:

Say: When you begin with *although*, it signals that you're going to talk about something that seems to contradict something else. Here's an example: *Although I love animals, I eat meat*. The two parts of that sentence seem to contradict each other. But life is complex, and full of facts and ideas that contradict each other. It's good to acknowledge this complexity—and the word *although* helps you do that.

Slide 8/11

Lesson: Learning from Mentor Sentences

If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.
— George Orwell

When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.
— Victor Frankl

Introduction

Read the examples to the class and discuss how the complex structure strengthens the sentences.

Say: I'm going to read these sentences to you. Think as you listen: Do you notice anything about these sentences, beyond the fact that they're complex?

Read the sentences out loud to the class.

Say: What did you notice about these sentences?

Ask students to share their ideas.

Say: I just wanted you to notice that each of these sentences contains an interesting, original observation. The authors say unexpected things...and the structure helps them do that because a complex sentence has at least two parts.

Say: Often, the second part contains a surprising twist or an unexpected insight. The structure itself asks you to make your thinking more complex.

Say: There's one more thing I want to point out. Look at the sentences again. Do you see commas in them?

Anticipated student response: Yes.

Say: In most complex sentences, a comma separates the main part from the add-on part. But you don't always need a comma.

Say: Usually, if the *main* part of the sentence comes first—that’s the simple sentence—you don’t need to add a comma. I’ll give you an example: *Things got scarier after the sun when down.* In that sentence, the main part comes first—and you don’t need a comma.

Say: But if the add-on part comes first, you usually need to separate it from the main part with a comma. (The sentences on your screen show how this works.)

Slide 9/11: Class Activity: Writing Complex Sentences

Write two complex sentences of your own.

Sentence #1: Use a joining word about time (*after, before, when*, etc.). Begin the sentence with the add-on part.

Sentence #2: Use the word *because*. Begin with the main part of the sentence, and put the add-on at the end.

Individual Practice

Ask students to write two complex sentences on their own.

Say: Now you’re going to write two complex sentences of your own. There are directions on your screen. They ask you to begin sentence #1 with a joining word. That means you’ll put the add-on part at the beginning.

Say: For #2, the directions ask you to use the word “because.” I’d like you to vary your structure, and put the add-on part after the main part in sentence #2.

Say: Before you start, let me mention that it’s important to vary your sentence structure this way. Can anyone think of a reason why?

Anticipated student response:

- For variety
- So readers don’t get bored
- So it doesn’t sound monotonous

Say: That’s right. If you write more than two sentences with the same structure—with an add-on part at the beginning, or at the end—it will start to sound repetitive. You’ll sound a bit like a robot.

Say: By the way, if you’re not sure how to do this, and want to look at a model, look back at the sentences we read just before.

Discussion

Select 1-2 correct responses and 2-3 incorrect responses to display and discuss.

Discuss the correct sentences, and lead a discussion about how the incorrect sentences could be revised.

Slide 10/11

Write a complex sentence using the word *although*

Example: Although the Wright Brothers are considered the inventors of the airplane, Leonardo Da Vinci designed a human-powered flying machine 400 years earlier.

Individual Practice

Ask students to write a complex sentence on their own.

Say: This time you're going to write a complex sentence that expresses two contrasting ideas. All you have to do is use the word *although*.

Say: Read the directions on your screen. If you're feeling confident, try writing a sentence about history or current events. I've given you an example to show you how it's done.

Discussion

Select 3-4 responses to display and discuss.

Discuss the correct sentences, and lead a discussion about how the incorrect sentences could be revised.

Slide 11/11: Wrap-Up

Today, I learned:

- A complex sentence is a sentence with a main part and an add-on part.
- The add-on part begins with a joining word such as *although*.
- The add-on part can come at the beginning or the end of the sentence.
- Complex sentences help you add information to a sentence and express contrasting ideas.

Wrap-up

Review what the students learned today.

Say: Let's wrap this up by reviewing what complex sentences are, and how we can use them.

Assign a different student to read each of the four points aloud.

Say: Does anyone have any questions about complex sentences?

You can assign an independent practice activity that students can either complete now or later.

You can also pull aside the flagged students for small group instruction.

Say: Follow the instructions on your screen. If your screen says to begin the next activity, go ahead and begin it now. If your screen

says to wait for instructions, please wait for your next steps from me.