

Common Sentence Types and Patterns

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the various sentence types and how to properly construct them. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Basic Sentence Patterns

1a. Subject + Verb

1b. Subject + Verb + Direct Object

1c. Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object

2. Clauses

3. Sentence Types

3a. Simple Sentences

3b. Compound Sentences

3c. Complex Sentences

1. Basic Sentence Patterns

Recall that all sentences have a subject and a verb: who or what the sentence is about, and what action is being performed. Some sentences also include an object, or the item being acted upon by the subject.

What you may not yet know, however, is that there are two types of objects: direct and indirect. A **direct object** is an object that directly receives the action of the verb, while an **indirect object** is impacted by the verb's action but is not the direct recipient.

➞ **EXAMPLE** In the sentence "I brewed my sister a cup of tea," the cup of tea is the direct object because it is what's being brewed, and "my sister" is the indirect object because - while she is affected by the brewing of the tea - she herself is not being brewed. To help make the relationship between these parts of the sentence clearer, the sentence could be rephrased to say, "I brewed a cup of tea for my sister."

Therefore, the three most common sentence patterns you are likely to encounter are:

- Subject plus verb
- Subject plus verb plus direct object
- Subject plus verb plus indirect object plus direct object



TERMS TO KNOW

Direct Object

An object that directly receives the action of the verb.

Indirect Object

An object that is impacted by the action of the verb but is not the direct recipient.

1a. Subject + Verb

The simplest of sentence patterns is composed of a subject and verb, without a direct object or subject complement. It uses an **intransitive verb**, which is a verb that does not require a direct object.

➞ EXAMPLE In the sentence "Control rods remain inside the fuel assembly of the reactor," "rods" is the subject and "remain" is the verb.

➞ EXAMPLE In the sentence "The development of wind power practically ceased until the early 1970s," "development" is the subject and "ceased" is the verb.



TERM TO KNOW

Intransitive Verb

A verb that does not require a direct object.

1b. Subject + Verb + Direct Object

Another common sentence pattern uses the direct object, along with the subject and the verb.

➞ EXAMPLE In the sentence "Silicon conducts electricity in an unusual way," the subject is "silicon," the verb is "conducts," and the direct object is "electricity."

➞ EXAMPLE In the sentence "The anti-reflective coating on the silicon cell reduces reflection from 32 to 22 percent," the subject is "coating," the verb is "reduces," and the direct object is "reflection."

1c. Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object

Finally, the sentence pattern with the indirect object and direct object is similar to the previous pattern.

➞ EXAMPLE In the sentence "I am writing her about a number of problems that I have had with my computer," the subject is "I," the verb is "am writing," the indirect object is "her," and the direct object is "problems."

➞ EXAMPLE In the sentence "Austin, Texas has recently built its citizens a system of bike lanes," the subject is "Austin, Texas," the verb is "built," the indirect object is "citizens," and the direct object is "system."

2. Clauses

Also remember that sentences contain **clauses**, or groups of words that contain a subject and a verb. Clauses may be independent or dependent.

An **independent clause** can form a sentence on its own.

↪ EXAMPLE *The dog ran.*

A **dependent clause** cannot form a sentence of its own.

↪ EXAMPLE *for miles and miles*

The way in which clauses are combined determines the sentence type and punctuation needs.



TERMS TO KNOW

Clause

A group of words that includes a subject and a verb.

Independent Clause

A clause that can stand alone as a sentence, although it does not have to do so.

Dependent Clause

A clause that cannot stand on its own as a sentence.

3. Sentence Types

There are three main types of sentences:

- Simple
- Compound
- Complex

Let's take a closer look at each.

3a. Simple Sentences

A **simple sentence** is one that contains a subject and a verb but no other independent or dependent clause.

↪ EXAMPLE *One of the tubes is attached to the steel instrument.*

↪ EXAMPLE *There are basically two types of stethoscopes.*

In the above sentence, the subject and verb are inverted, meaning that the verb comes before the subject. However, it is still considered a simple sentence.

➞ EXAMPLE *To measure blood pressure, a sphygmomanometer and a stethoscope are needed.*

This sentence has a compound subject - that is, there are two subjects - but it is also considered a simple sentence.

Command sentences are a subtype of simple sentences. These sentences are unique because they don't actually have a subject.

➞ EXAMPLE *Make sure to take good notes today.*

➞ EXAMPLE *After completing the reading, answer the following questions.*

In each of these sentences, there is an implied subject: you. These sentences are instructing the reader to complete a task. Command sentences are the only sentences in English that are complete without a subject.



TERM TO KNOW

Simple Sentence

A sentence that contains a subject and a verb but no other independent or dependent clause.

3b. Compound Sentences

A **compound sentence** is made up of two or more independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (e.g., for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) and a comma, an adverbial conjunction and a semicolon, or just a semicolon.

➞ EXAMPLE *I have an active sweet tooth, so I have to be careful when eating dessert!*

➞ EXAMPLE *Some cuffs hook together; others wrap or snap into place.*



TERM TO KNOW

Compound Sentence

A sentence that contains two or more independent clauses.

3c. Complex Sentences

A **complex sentence** is made up of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses.

When the independent clause comes first, no comma is needed in between the clauses.

➞ EXAMPLE *The dog ran for miles and miles.*

➞ EXAMPLE *He felt hungry until the next morning.*

When the dependent clause comes first, a comma is needed in between the clauses.

➞ EXAMPLE *Until the last runner came through, he could not leave his post.*

➞ EXAMPLE *Because she felt thirsty, she drank the entire water bottle.*



TERM TO KNOW

Complex Sentence

A sentence that contains both an independent clause and a dependent clause.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that there are three **basic sentence patterns** that you should be aware of: **subject plus verb**, **subject plus verb plus direct object**, and **subject plus verb plus indirect object plus direct object**. Sentences contain **clauses**, which can be independent or dependent. It's important to look for these clauses, because the way they are combined will tell you what type of sentence you are looking at.

You also learned that there are three main **sentence types**: **simple sentences**, which just contain a subject and a verb, **compound sentences**, which contain at least two independent clauses, and **complex sentences**, which contain both an independent clause and a dependent clause.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: This content has been adapted from Lumen Learning's "Common Sentence Structures" tutorial.



TERMS TO KNOW

Clause

A group of words that includes a subject and a verb.

Complex Sentence

A sentence that contains both an independent clause and a dependent clause.

Compound Sentence

A sentence that contains two or more independent clauses.

Dependent Clause

A clause that cannot stand on its own as a sentence.

Direct Object

An object that directly receives the action of the verb.

Independent Clause

A clause that can stand alone as a sentence, although it does not have to do so.

Indirect Object

An object that is impacted by the action of the verb but is not the direct recipient.

Intransitive Verb

A verb that does not require a direct object.

Simple Sentence

A sentence that contains a subject and a verb but no other independent or dependent clause.