



Second Research Capacity Building Workshop Series

Academic Writing: Sentence - Paragraph Structure and Effective Use of Terms

Ms. Sivpheng Haing

January 24, 2025

Contents

I. Sentence Structures

1. Types of Clauses
2. Types of Sentences

II. Sentence Problems

1. Fragments
2. Choppy Sentences
3. Run-On Sentences and Comma Splices
4. Stringy Sentences

III. Paragraph Components

1. Topic Sentences

2. Supporting Sentences

3. Concluding Sentences

IV. Effective Use of Terminology

I. Sentence Structures



1. Types of Clauses

A. Independent clauses : simple sentences - complete thought

- Forms: **S + V. / S + V + O.**

- Ex: She learns English.

B. Dependent clauses: incomplete thought- adverb, adjective, and noun clauses

- Forms: **Subordinator + S + V.**

Subordinator + S + V + O.

- Ex: Because she learns English.

Subordinators

after

before

that

when

which

although

even though

though

whenever

while

as

how

unless

where

who

as if

if

until

wherever

whom

as soon as

since

what

whether

whose

because

Adverb Clauses

Adverb Clause Subordinators		
Time	when, whenever, while, as soon as, after, since, as, before, until	Whenever I had to speak in front of people, I was paralyzed by fear.
Place	where, wherever, everywhere, anywhere	I saw unfriendly, critical faces everywhere I looked.
Distance	as + adverb + as	She runs on the beach as far as she can.
Frequency	as + adverb + as	He visits his family as often as he can.
Manner	as, as + adverb + as, as if/as though	I tried to act as if I were not afraid.
Reason	because, since, as	Since I need to make speeches for career advancement, I enrolled in a speech class.
Purpose	so that, in order that	I took a speech class so that I could overcome my fear of public speaking.
Result	so + adjective/adverb + that such a(n) + noun + that so much/little + noun + that so many/few + noun + that	At first, making a speech made me so nervous that I got a stomachache before every class. During the semester, I made so many speeches that I lost some of my fear.
Concession (unexpected result)	although, even though, though	Even though I am a successful business executive, I still do not enjoy speaking in public.
Contrast (direct opposition)	while, whereas	At social events, I like to talk quietly with one or two people, whereas my girlfriend enjoys being in the center of a crowd.
Conditional	if, unless	If I hadn't taken that speech class in college, I wouldn't be able to do my job well. Unless I have to give an impromptu speech on a topic I know nothing about, I feel quite confident in front of any audience.

Adjective Clauses

Relative Pronouns				
who	refers to people	subject in its own clause	restrictive or nonrestrictive	The professor who teaches my biology class won a Nobel Prize two years ago. Professor Jones, who teaches my biology class , won a Nobel Prize two years ago.
whom	refers to people	object in its own clause	restrictive or nonrestrictive	She loaned her car to someone whom she did not know . Professor Jones, whom I have for biology , won a Nobel Prize two years ago.
whose	refers to people, animals, and things; shows possession	subject or object in its own clause	restrictive or nonrestrictive	I studied algebra with a professor whose name I have forgotten . Apple Computer, whose Macintosh computer changed computing , was started by two men working in a garage.
which	refers to animals and things	subject or object in its own clause	nonrestrictive only	She teaches biology, which is my favorite subject . Her husband teaches algebra, which I enjoy the least .
that	refers to animals and things; informally, refers to people	subject or object in its own clause; if <i>that</i> is an object, it may be omitted	restrictive only	The class that meets in the next room is very noisy. The subject that I enjoy the least is algebra. The subject I enjoy the least is algebra. The salesman that sold me my car was fired. (<i>informal</i>)

Adjective Clauses

Relative Adverbs				
when	refers to a time		restrictive	I work full time on days when I do not have classes.
			or nonrestrictive	I did not work last week, when I had my final exams.
where	refers to a place		restrictive	She has never returned to the city where she was born.
			or nonrestrictive	First City Bank, where I have a checking account, was robbed last week.

Noun Clauses : Nouns- subjects or objects

1. That clauses:

- The young filmmaker hopes **that his film will be a financial success.**
- **That the teacher canceled the exam surprised us.**
(awkward)
- It surprised us **that the teacher canceled the exam.**

That Clauses- Subjunctive Noun Clauses

- urgency, desirability, necessity, and advisability

Ex. It is **necessary** that each salesperson **work** longer hours.

It was **recommended** that the department **not hire** new staff at this time.

Verbs			Adjectives	
advise	insist	request	advisable	mandatory
ask	order	require	desirable	necessary
command	prefer	suggest	essential	urgent
demand	propose	urge	important	vital
direct	recommend			

2. If/Whether Clauses

- The patient wants to know **if Dr. Chen practices acupuncture.**
- The patient wants to know **if Dr. Chen practices acupuncture or not.**
- The patient wants to know **whether Dr. Chen practices acupuncture.**
- The patient wants to know **whether Dr. Chen practices acupuncture or not.**

3. Question Clauses- Beginning with a WH- Q word

- The police do not know **who committed the robbery.**
- The police do not know **when the robbery happened.**
- The victims did not know **how the robbers had entered the apartment.**
- I don't know **where you were born.**



Quiz: Adjective Clause, Adverb Clause, and Noun Clause



2. Types of Sentences

A. A Simple Sentence : an independent clause

-Forms:

a. **S + V.**

- S₁ and S₂ + V₁ and V₂.

- S₁, S₂, and S₃ + V₁, V₂, and V₃.

- S₁, S₂, S₃,, and S_n + V₁, V₂, V₃,, and V_n.

b. **S + V + O.**

- S₁ and S₂ + V₁ and V₂ + O₁ and O₂.

- S₁, S₂, and S₃ + V₁, V₂, and V₃ + O₁, O₂, and O₃.

- S₁, S₂, S₃,, and S_n + V₁, V₂, V₃,, and V_n + O₁, O₂, O₃,, and O_n.

- Examples:

- + We go to school.
- + Dara and Thida are good classmates.
- + Dara, Thida, and Sok live in Phnom Penh.
- + Dara and Thida study and work at Rupp.
- + Dara can speak and write English well.

Exercise: Write 1 simple sentence

B. A Compound Sentence: 2 independent clauses joined by

1. A coordinator/coordinating conjunction (**FANBOYS**)

An independent clause,	For : because	an independent clause.
	And : as well	
	Nor : not	
	But	
	Or : if not	
	Yet : but & surprising	
	So	

Examples

- **For**: Japanese people live longer than most other nationalities, **for** they eat healthful diets.
- **And**: They eat a lot of fish and vegetables, **and** they eat lightly.
- **Nor**: They do not eat a lot of red meat, **nor** do they eat many dairy products.
- **But**: Diet is one factor in how long people live, **but** it is not the only factor.
- **Or**: People should limit the amount of animal fat in their diets, **or** they risk getting heart disease.
- **Yet**: I am very bad at math, **yet** my parents want me to study engineering.
- **So**: It rained hard yesterday, **so** less students came to class.

2. A conjunctive adverbs

Forms:

- An independent clause; conjunctive adverb, an independent clause.
- An independent clause. Conjunctive adverb, an independent clause.

Conjunctive adverbs:

- also - besides - furthermore - moreover
- **however** - otherwise - in contrast - hence
- therefore - in addition - **nevertheless** - as a result
- for example - **nonetheless** - consequently - **still**

Examples:

- Community colleges offer preparation for many occupations; **moreover**, they prepare students to transfer to a four- year university.
- The cost of attending a community college is low. **However**, many students need financial aid.
- Students must take final exams; **otherwise**, they will receive a grade of Incomplete.
- Most colleges now have a writing requirement for gradation. **For instance**, students at my college must pass a writing test before they register for their final semester.

3. A semicolon

Form:

- An independent clause; an independent clause.

Example:

- Grammar is easy; I learn it quickly.

Exercise: Write 1 compound sentence

C. A complex sentence:

Meaning: 1 independent & 1/ more dependent clauses

Forms:

- An independent clause + one/ more adverb clause(s).
- An independent clause + one/ more adjective clause(s).
- An independent clause + one/ more noun clause(s).

Examples:

- **Because grammar is easy**, I learn it quickly.
- One of my favorite films is Like Water for Chocolate, **which is in Spanish**.
- She does not agree **that grammar is easy**.

Exercise: Write 1 complex sentence

D. A compound- complex sentence

Meaning: 2 independent & 1/more dependent clauses

Examples:

1. I wanted to travel after I graduated from college; however, I had to go to work immediately.
2. After I graduated from college, I wanted to travel, but I had to go to work immediately.
3. I wanted to travel after I graduated from college but I had to go to work immediately because I had to support my family.
4. I could not decide where I should work or what I should do, so I did nothing.

Exercise: Write 1 compound-complex sentence

Quiz: Simple, Compound, Complex, and Compound-Complex Sentences



II. Sentence Problems

1. Fragments: incomplete/ parts of sentences

a. A dependent clause

Ex. Because some students work part time while taking a full load of classes.

- How to correct:

(1) Add an independent clause:

+ Because some students work part time while taking a full load of classes, **they have very little free time.**

(2) Delete the subordinator

+ Some students work part time while taking a full load of classes.

b. A sentence without a verb/ sub

Ex. The increase in the cost of renting an apartment one reason for more people being homeless.

- **How to correct: Add a verb**

+ The increase in the cost of renting an apartment **is** one reason for more people being homeless.

c. A noun & an adjective clause

Ex. Teachers who give too much homework.

- **How to correct: Finish the independent clause**

+ Teachers who give too much homework **are popular.**

2. Choppy Sentences : too short sentences

Examples:

- Wind is an enduring source of power. Water is also an unlimited energy. Dams produce hydraulic power. They have existed for a long time. Windmills are relatively new.
- We must find new sources of energy. Natural sources of energy are decreasing. Solar energy is a promising new source of energy. Solar energy is energy from the sun.

How to correct: use coordinators/ subordinators to combine choppy sentences

Use coordinators

- Both wind and water are enduring sources of power. Dams have produced hydraulic power for a long time, **but** windmills are relatively new.

Use subordinators

- We must find new sources of energy **because** natural sources of energy are dwindling. Solar energy, **which** is energy from the sun, is a promising new source.

3. Run-On Sentences and Comma Splices

- **A run-on sentence:** 2/ more independent clauses without punctuation

Ex. My family went to USA they emigrated to Canada.

- **A comma splice:** 2 independent clauses joined by a comma

Ex. My family went to USA, they emigrated to Canada.

How to correct run-on sentences & comma splices

a. Add a period:

- My family went to USA. They emigrated to Canada.

b. Add a semicolon:

- My family went to USA; they emigrated to Canada.

c. Add a coordinator:

- My family went to USA, and they emigrated to Canada.

d. Add a subordinator:

- After my family went to USA, they emigrated to Canada.

4. Stringy Sentences

Meaning: a sentence with too many independent clauses- **and, but, so, because**

Example: Many students attend classes all morning, **and** then the work all afternoon, **and** they also have to study at night, so they are usually exhausted by the weekend.

How to correct: divide/ recombine the clauses

- Many students attend classes all morning and work all afternoon. **Since** they also have to study at night, they are usually exhausted by the weekend.
- **Because** many students attend classes all morning, work all afternoon, and study at night, they are usually exhausted by the weekend.

Quiz: Run-On Sentence, Comma Splice, Fragment or Sentence



III. Paragraph Components



A paragraph's features

- Three parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.
- Ident only the first sentence
- Length: about 5- 15 sentences
- The first sentence is usually the topic sentence

1. Topic Sentences

- A topic sentence: topic + controlling/ main idea (s)
- **Features of a good topic sentence:**
 - + Not a well-known fact:
Ex. Cars use gasoline.
 - + Not too general:
Ex. Credit cards are useful **(on long trips)**.
 - + Not too specific:
Ex. A credit card can have a high credit limit.
 - + Have a controlling idea:
Ex. A credit card is one of **the most important things that a traveler needs while on vacation.**

Structures for writing Topic Sentences

1. There are a few/ some/ several reasons why.....
2.for a few/ some/ several reasons.

Examples:

- I bought a new jacket for a few/ some/ several reasons.
- There are a few/ some/ several reasons why I bought a new jacket.

Exercise : Highlight the topic and underline the controlling idea in each topic sentence

1. An ideal roommate has three qualities.
2. Studying computer science is difficult for several reasons.
3. Computer logic error is the most difficult problem to solve.
4. Attending a small college has several advantages for foreign students.
5. There are a number of steps to replace a motherboard.

Exercise : Highlight the topic and underline the controlling idea in each topic sentence

1. **An ideal roommate** has three qualities.
2. **Studying computer science** is difficult for several reasons.
3. **Computer logic error** is the most difficult problem to solve.
4. **Attending a small college** has several advantages for foreign students.
5. There are a number of steps **to replace a motherboard**.

2. Supporting Sentences : Wh- questions

1. Supporting sentences explain.

Topic sentence: There are many support services for students at the university.

Supporting sentence: These services, such as tutoring, are generally free for students.
(explains the support services available for students at the university)

2. Supporting sentences describe.

Topic sentence: I will never forget my childhood home.

Supporting sentence: The house had a large entrance with a spiral staircase in the center.
(describes the writer's childhood home)

3. Supporting sentences give reasons.

Topic sentence: Note taking is one of the most important study skills to learn.

Supporting sentence: Reviewing good notes before a test will help students become more familiar with the information. (gives a reason that note taking is an important study skill to learn)

4. Supporting sentences give facts.

Topic sentence: Jogging is not as easy as it appears.

Supporting sentence: Ninety-seven percent of people cannot jog three miles without stopping.
(gives a fact about jogging)

5. Supporting sentences give examples.

Topic sentence: Brazil has many natural resources.

Supporting sentence: Brazil is one of the leading producers of bauxite, a principal ingredient for making aluminum. (gives an example of Brazil's natural resources)

Exercise: Good or bad supporting sentences?

Visiting Washington, DC

One of my greatest vacations was spent in Washington, DC.

1 The first thing I did on my arrival was to visit some of the Smithsonian Institution's museums. These museums were gigantic, with elaborate marble floors and pillars that reached dizzying heights. I spent three days visiting these museums, which are free to the public, and then I saw some impressive memorials. The Lincoln Memorial was immense. After reading the Gettysburg Address at the Lincoln Memorial, I decided to walk down the National Mall to the Washington Monument. I was moved by the size and simplicity of the tall, rectangular stone tower, or obelisk, dedicated to the memory of the first president of the United States. 2 My final day in Washington was spent just walking around. Because it was April, I even got to see the famous cherry blossoms in bloom. 3 Although April is a spring month, some types of trees do not bloom until late summer. Clearly, Washington, DC has a lot to offer its visitors!

3. Concluding Sentences

- A. Restart the topic sentence: same idea, different word
- B. Sum up the supporting sentences into a sentence
- C. Express writer's view about the topic (suggestions, recommendations, prediction...)

Transitions

as a result	for this reason	in the end
because of this	hence	overall
certainly	in conclusion	surely
clearly	indeed	therefore
for these reasons	in sum	thus

Examples:

In conclusion, successful businesses are the result of the actions of good workers.

Overall, buying a used car has more advantages than buying a new car.

IV. Effective Use of Terminology



Concise/ Precise Words

Instead of this

We are of the opinion that

Please feel free to

In addition to the above

At this point in time

Despite the fact that

Try this

We think

Please

Also

Now

Although

Examples	Explanation
<p>At the 2012 Olympic Games in London, Usain Bolt of Jamaica broke his own Olympic record in the 100-meter dash. He is a good runner.</p>	<p>Poor word choice: good</p> <p>Good is vague.</p> <p>Good does not adequately describe an athlete who has won an Olympic medal.</p>
<p>At the 2012 Olympic Games in London, Usain Bolt of Jamaica broke his own Olympic record in the 100-meter dash. He is an exceptional runner.</p>	<p>Better word choice: exceptional</p> <p>Exceptional is more precise.</p> <p>Exceptional tells the reader that Usain Bolt is more than a good runner.</p>
<p>At the 2012 Olympic Games in London, Usain Bolt of Jamaica broke his own Olympic record in the 100-meter dash. He is a(n) _____ runner.</p>	<p>Other clear and descriptive words to fit this sentence: outstanding, phenomenal, premier, unique</p>

Remove Redundant Words

~~advance~~ warning

~~close~~ proximity

~~exactly~~ identical

filled ~~to capacity~~

~~final~~ outcome

~~necessary~~ requisite

~~new~~ beginning

~~past~~ history

refer ~~back~~

~~serious~~ danger

Limit Long Lead-Ins

Instead of this

This memo is to inform you that all employees meet today.

I am writing this letter to say thanks to everyone who voted.

Try this

All employees meet today.

Thanks to everyone who voted.

Exercise for online participants



Exercise for offline participants

Write a paragraph

References

- ▶ Guffey, M. E. & Loewy, D. (2023). *Essentials of Business Communication* (12th ed.). Boston: Cengage.
- ▶ Foles, K. S., Muchmore-Vokoun, A., & Solomon, E. V. (2014). *Great Writing 1: Great Sentences for Great Paragraphs* (4th ed.). Boston: National Geographic Learning.
- ▶ Fols, K. S., Solomon, E. V., & Clabeaux, D. (2015). *Great Writing 3: From Great Paragraphs to Great Essays* (3rd ed.). Boston : National Geographic Learning.
- ▶ Oshima, A. & Houge, A. (2014). *The Longman Academic Writing series 4: Essays (4th ed.)*. New York: Pearson Education Inc.
- ▶ <https://lemongrad.com/exercises-on-simple-compound-complex-and-compound-complex-sentences/>