SENTENCE PATTERN

WHAT IS THIS AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT

Sentence pattern is the variety of simple and complex sentences that you use in your writing and the way they are arranged within the paper. There are many different types of sentences ranging from basic sentences to sentences containing multiple types of clauses. Sentence pattern is important to manipulate because it can make your writing more appealing to the reader by presenting your information and ideas both in plain, blunt ways, and in more complex combinations. By using a wide variety of sentences, your writing can avoid being boring or repetitive and can get your point across effectively.

SUBJECTS AND PREDICATES

All English sentences must contain at least two parts, a subject and a predicate. The subjects are generally “the someone” or “the something” of the sentence that performs the action or has some element of them described. While looking for the subjects of your sentences, you should most often look for nouns or pronouns. The predicate describes the action taking place or clarifies more information about the subject. Predicates are generally the verbs of the sentence.

Examples:

- The fish swam in his bowl slowly. [The fish + swam in his bowl slowly]
The subject of this sentence is The fish and the predicate is swam in his bowl slowly.

- He is tall. [He + is tall]
The subject of this sentence is He and the predicate is is tall.

- The movie premiere lasted until midnight. [The movie premiere + lasted until midnight]
The subject of this sentence is The movie premiere and the predicate is lasted until midnight.

INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT CLAUSES

Once you have joined your subject and verb together, you now have a clause. There are two types of clauses, independent clauses and dependent clauses. Independent clauses are those that are complete and can stand on their own as a grammatically correct sentence.
Dependent clauses, although they contain a subject and verb, are too weak to be used alone and are often incomplete thoughts that need to be modified by another part of the sentence.

- [She gave the testimony] [that proved the defendant was guilty.]

Since the clause *She gave the testimony* would be considered a grammatical sentence on its own, it is the independent clause of this sentence. *That proved the defendant was guilty* is a dependent clause because even though it contains a subject *the defendant* and a verb *was*, it would be a fragment if it was standing alone because it is an incomplete thought without the first clause.

[He received the gold medal] [because he had the fastest time.]

Since the clause *He received the gold medal* is a complete sentence by itself, it is the independent clause. *Because he had the fastest time* cannot stand by itself without being modified and so it is the dependent clause.

### FOUR DIFFERENT TYPES OF SENTENCES

There are four main types of sentences: Simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences.

**Simple Sentences:** Simple sentences contain only one independent clause.

**Examples:**

- I went to the store.
- The dog ran after the ball.
- The song played on repeat.

**Compound Sentences:** Compound sentences contain two or more independent clauses that are conjoined together by a conjunction or a connecting word. (For, and, nor, but, or, yet, so). There should be no dependent clauses in compound sentences.

**Examples: (IC= Independent Clause)**

- **IC 1**[The student body president proposed a new school rule], **but IC 2**[the student body did not agree with the idea.]
- **IC 1**[My mom went to the grocery store], **and IC 2** [she got her car serviced.]
- **IC 1**[Should we eat the food], **or IC 2**[should we wait for everyone to get here?]
Complex Sentences: Complex sentences contain one independent clause with one or more dependent clauses. The dependent clause should follow a connecting word similar to those used in compound sentences.

Examples: (*IC* = Independent Clause, *DC* = Dependent Clause)

- *IC* [The actress was happy] *DC* [that she got a part in the play] *DC* [although it was a small one.]
- *DC* [When I was younger], *IC* [I had an imaginary friend.]
- *DC* [Since she was so good at Geometry], *IC* [no one expected her to fail Algebra.]

Compound-complex Sentences: Compound-complex sentences are those that contain two independent clauses with one or more dependent clauses. The two independent clauses should be conjoined by a conjunction.

Examples:

- *DC* [Since it rained so much during the summer that year], *IC* [the air was very humid], **and IC 2**[the grass grew very tall.]
- *DC* [According to last year’s research, *IC* [scientists can now make predictions for the next 5 years.] and **IC 2** [they can come up with possible solutions.]
- *IC* [Thomas wanted to order four pizzas], **DC** [but since I ate a lot for lunch], **IC 2** [I only wanted to order two pizzas.]

Proofreading Tips: Go through your paper, or even just a few paragraphs, and color code each type of sentence with a different color. If there is too much of one color, see if you can combine some of your simple sentences into compound sentences, and maybe some of your complex sentences can be pulled apart into simple, concise sentences. Once you are finished revising your sentence pattern, try this tip again and your paper should be multi-colored. Sentence pattern is an impactful stylistic technique and can help improve the overall effect of your writing.