

Clauses and sentences

This video follows on from video 1: a review of the basics, words, phrases and clauses. If you are unsure about these, you may like to go back and review the first video. In this video, we will review the basics of clauses and sentence structure. So, in the previous video, we revised words, phrases and clauses. Let's turn now to sentences.

You may recall in video one, we looked at this image and created many different sentences. Alright. I'm sure you can see that these sentences are very different and range from quite short to quite long. We will now look at four different types of sentences.

Here's an example sentence for us to analyse. The first step is to find the verb. In this case, it's the word *finished*. The next step is to find the subject. To do that we ask *who* or *what* before the verb. So, Who finished their assignment? *They* did. *They* is the subject. This example is a **simple sentence**. It is also known as an **independent clause**. It can stand alone.

It is important to remember: Every sentence or clause has a subject *and* a verb. In fact, sometimes a sentence is just a subject and a verb.

Now, some simple sentences are completed by an **object** or a **complement**. To find the object, we ask *who* or *what* after the verb. In the first sentence, it's They finished what? Their assignment. *Their assignment* is the object. If we can't find an object, the sentence may have a complement. To find the complement, we might ask *when*, *where*, *how* or *why* after the verb. In this case: They finished when? *On Friday* *On friday* is the complement.

The simple sentence - or subject + verb - is the foundation of your writing. Once you have created a simple sentence, you can build on it by adding other elements to the beginning, the middle or the end. What elements could you add to this sentence? Pause here to think of some examples.

Okay, compare your ideas with these. Beginning ... Middle ... end

Notice that some of these ideas are word and phrases, but some are clauses. This leads us to the second type of sentence.

Consider this sentence. This example has two verbs and two subjects. Can you find them? Okay, so verb 1 is *met* and subject 1 is *two students*. Verb 2 is *stood* and subject 2 is *they*. This sentence has two clauses. They are both independent. They can stand alone. This is known as a **compound sentence**.

When we join two clauses together, we need to use a linking word, known as a conjunction. In this case the conjunction is *and*. Two independent clauses are joined by a **co-ordinating conjunction**. We only have a small number of co-ordinating conjunctions and we can remember them with the acronym FANBOYS. We know that A stands for *and*. Can you guess what the other letters stand for? Pause here to think.

Okay, we have *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet* and *so*.

Turning now to the third type of sentence, consider how this example is different to a compound sentence. Can you find the verb and subject of the second clause? Pause here to think xxx

Okay, in the second clause we have the verb *finished* and the subject *they*. But in this case, we have an independent clause and a dependent one. The second clause doesn't stand alone as a separate idea. The idea is connected to the main idea in the first clause. This is a **complex sentence**.

One important thing to remember is the difference between a dependent and an independent clause. An independent clause can stand alone. It can function as a simple sentence. However, a dependent clause can NOT stand alone. *After they finished their assignment* seems incomplete. It needs another clause to finish the idea. We call this a sentence fragment.

Next, you know that when we join two clauses together, we need to use a conjunction. In this case the conjunction is *after*. An independent and a dependent clause are joined by a **subordinating conjunction**. There are many subordinating conjunctions that perform a range of functions. This table shows the most common that you may use in your writing.

Finally, the last type of sentence is a combination. Look at this example on the screen now. A sentence with one or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses is a **compound–complex sentence**. You will see a lot of these in your reading.

In this video, we have reviewed simple, compound, complex and compound-complex sentences. How many examples of each can you find in these sentences? Pause here to think. Okay, so compare your ideas with these. How many did you find?

The aim of this video was to review the basics of sentence structure. You learned about dependent and independent clauses, and we reviewed four basic types of sentences. These basics are the foundation of your writing at university. Work through the materials on this page to put this learning to practice.

And if you need more help, get in contact with the Language and Learning advisors at the library.