

Forming sentences

A **sentence** is a group of words which contains a complete idea and makes sense on its own. It starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark. Sentences are made up of words, **phrases** and **clauses**.



A **clause** is a group of words that contains a verb (one idea). There are two different types of clause: A **main clause** can stand alone (and can be a whole sentence) whereas a **subordinate clause** is dependent on a main clause for meaning. A **sub-ordinate clause** is usually introduced by a **conjunction**.

A **phrase** is a group of words that does *not* contain a verb. If a phrase is written about a **noun**, it is called a **noun phrase**; if it is written about a **preposition**, it is called a **prepositional phrase** and if it is written about a **verb**, it is called an **adverbial phrase**.



e.g. After dinner, she stared solemnly and quietly at the big, bright moon.

After dinner – **prepositional phrase**. It doesn't contain a verb so it's a phrase. It tells us more about the position, direction or time (preposition).

she stared – **main clause**. It contains a verb and makes sense on its own.

solemnly and quietly – **adverbial phrase**. It does not contain a verb. Its tells us more about how the verb was done.

the big, bright moon – **noun phrase**. It doesn't contain a verb. It tells us more about the noun (moon).

Sentences can be used in three different ways depending on how they are formed:

Question
Command
Statement



Question – These sentences are used to interrogate. They often have an **auxiliary (helping) verb** before the subject (the person or object the sentence is about). They always end with a question mark. e.g. *Where is the ketchup?*



Command – These sentences instruct someone to do something. They usually start with an imperative/ bossy verb and often end with an exclamation mark. e.g. *Give me the ketchup!*



Statement – These are the most common type of sentence. They express a fact or opinion and usually end with a full stop. e.g. *I like ketchup.*

There are three types of sentence: **Simple, complex** and **compound**



A **simple sentence** contains only one **clause** (idea). The term 'simple' can be quite confusing as a simple sentence can actually be very complicated.

e.g.
He shouted.
Without delay, I quickly jumped into the fast moving car with the magician and his assistant.

A **compound sentence** contains more than one **clause** connected with the **co-ordinating conjunctions** and, but, or & so. All of the clauses in a **compound sentence** are **main clauses** that could stand alone and still make perfect sense on their own.



e.g.
I like chocolate but I don't like cheese.
It was snowing so she built a snowman.

Like a **compound sentence**, a **complex sentence** contains more than one **clause** connected by a **conjunction**. However, in a **complex sentence**, there will always be at least one **subordinate clause** and a **subordinating conjunction** (such as because, if, while, although) to connect the clauses.

e.g.
If it rains, Peter will put on his coat.
Dave hid while George counted.

TIP! You can check if a sentence is complex or compound by flipping the clauses around.
"If you can't flip 'em round then you know it's compound!"

