



Sentence Structure Basics: Sentence Types

Overview:

Using a variety of sentence types is necessary for composing writing that is stylistically interesting and complex. There are four main sentence types: **simple sentences**, **compound sentences**, **complex sentences**, and **complex-compound sentences**. Alternating between sentence types will add variety to the rhythm of your writing, making it more engaging to your reader.

Simple Sentences

Simple sentences consist of just one **independent clause**.

Examples of simple sentences:

She went to the bookstore.

I want to be a teacher.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.

Few species of palm tree are native to Southern California.

Compound Sentences

Compound sentences are made up of two or more independent clauses, and no **dependent clauses**. Independent clauses must be joined together with **coordinating conjunctions** or **conjunctive adverbs**, in order to avoid **run-on sentences** and **commas splices**.

Examples of compound sentences:

She finally received her financial aid check, so she went to the bookstore to purchase her textbooks.

I want to be a teacher; consequently, I will be in school for another year in order to complete my teaching credential.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day; nevertheless, many people feel they do not have time for breakfast.

Many people associate palm trees with Southern California, yet few species of palm tree are native to this area.

Complex Sentences

Complex sentences consist of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses.

Examples of complex sentences:

She went to the bookstore to purchase her textbooks because she finally received her financial aid check.

Even though it's not the highest paying career, I want to be a teacher because I love working with children.

Although breakfast is the most important meal of the day, many people feel they do not have time for it.

Even though few species of palm tree are native to this area, many people associate palm trees with Southern California.

Complex-Compound Sentences

For a sentence to be a **complex-compound sentence**, it must be made up of multiple independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses.

Examples of complex-compound sentences:

She finally received her financial aid check, so she went to the bookstore to purchase her textbooks even though classes had not started yet.

I want to be a teacher; consequently, I will be in school for another year in order to complete my teaching credential unless I decide to teach pre-school instead.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day; nevertheless, many people feel they do not have time for breakfast because of their busy schedules.

Many people associate palm trees with Southern California, yet few species of palm tree are native to this area, although that fact is little known.

Style Matters

Now look at your own writing. Can you identify these sentence types in your writing? Focus on one paragraph in one of your essays. Revise the sentences in that paragraph so that you have at least one of each type of sentence. Remember that you should always include a variety of sentence types in your writing; try to avoid using the same one or two types. Varying sentence types helps you produce writing that is interesting and engaging to your reader.