

Sentence Structure Academic Resource Center

OVERVIEW

Independent Clause:

- Subject and verb express a complete thought as a whole sentence.
 - *She took her dog for a walk in the park.*

Dependent Clause:

- Subject and verb that don't express a complete thought as a sentence fragment.
- Often has a dependent marker word at the beginning of the phrase.
 - *When she took her dog for a walk in the park...*
(Then what happened? This thought is incomplete.)

Dependent Marker Words:

Common Dependent Markers: After, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, if, in order to, since, though, unless, until, whatever, when, whenever, whether, while

- Dependent clauses that begin with one of these words will usually be followed by “then” or a coordinating conjunction (see below).

COMBINING CLAUSES

Conjunctions are used to combine clauses. There are two types for combining independent clauses: coordinating conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs.

Coordinating Conjunctions:

A connecting word at the beginning of an independent clause.

- Coordinating Conjunctions: *and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet*
- When adding a second independent clause to a sentence, add a comma before the coordinating conjunction.
 - *She studied for her final test at the library, but it was hard for her to focus because of stress.*

Conjunctive Adverbs

A connecting word used at the beginning of an independent clause.

- Common Conjunctive Adverbs: *also, consequently, furthermore, however, moreover, nevertheless, therefore*
- When a second independent clause has a conjunctive adverb, add a semicolon before the conjunctive adverb.
 - *She studied for her final test at the library; however, it was hard for her to focus because of stress.*

COMMON PROBLEMS

Comma Splice:

- The use of a comma between two independent clauses.
 - Incorrect: *I like writing, it is very exciting.*
 - Correct: *I like writing. It is very exciting.*
 - (or) *I like writing; it is very exciting.*
 - (or) *I like writing, and it is very exciting.*
 - (or) *I like writing because it is very exciting.*
 - (or) *Because it is very exciting, I like writing.*

Fused Sentence:

- Two independent clauses not separated by any form of punctuation.
 - Incorrect: *My writing tutor is intelligent I've learned a lot from her.*
 - Correct: *My writing tutor is intelligent. I've learned a lot from her.*
 - (or) *My writing tutor is intelligent; I've learned a lot from her.*
 - (or) *My writing tutor is intelligent, and I've learned a lot from her.*
 - (or) *My writing tutor is intelligent; moreover, I've learned a lot from her.*

Sentence Fragment:

- When a dependent clause or other incomplete thought is treated as a complete sentence.
 - Incorrect: *Because I forgot the essay was due today.*
 - Correct: *Because I forgot the essay was due today, I didn't finish writing it.*
 - (or) *I forgot the essay was due today.*

Wordiness:

- Wordiness is using more words than are needed to make your point. Sometimes long sentences are necessary, especially if you're trying to make a complex point, but a paragraph cluttered with lots of extra words and phrases can distract the reader.
- Even though wordiness can sometimes sound "fancy," try to avoid using redundant words or phrases and to write in a way that is as precise and concise as possible.

References:

"Purdue Online Writing Lab: "Independent and Dependent Clauses"

- (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/598/01/>)

"Wordiness"

- (<http://www2.gsu.edu/~accerl/wordiness/WO.html>)