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)