

SENTENCES

THE PARTS OF A SENTENCE

Sentence: a group of words that expresses a complete thought. Every sentence contains a subject and a predicate.

- 1. Subject:** the noun or noun phrase that tells whom or what the sentence addresses.
—Roger decided to save more money.
—Almost all coffee drinks contain...

Full or complete subject: the subject and all the words that modify it.
—Patrick Henry's dream of freedom for all citizens compelled him to make his famous declaration.

Simple subject: the main noun of the complete subject.
—Patrick Henry's dream of freedom for all citizens compelled him to make his famous declaration.

Compound subject: a complete subject with multiple simple subjects.
—Miguel and the young boy became friends.

- 2. Predicate:** a verb or verb phrase telling what the subject does or is.

Full or complete predicate: the verb of the sentence and all the words that modify it.
—The old dog climbs slowly up the stairs.

Simple predicate: the main verb in the full predicate that indicates the action or state of being of the simple subject.
—The old dog climbs slowly up the stairs.

Compound predicate: a complete predicate with multiple verbs.
—As thought of his lover and missed her dearly.
—The goose was looking straight ahead and running for the pond.

- 3. Clause:** a part of a sentence that contains its own subject and predicate.

Independent clause: a clause that could function as its own sentence.
—When the Mets are playing, the stadium is full.

Dependent clause: a clause that cannot function as its own sentence. A dependent clause refers to an independent clause to complete its meaning.
A dependent clause can function as a noun.
—I noticed that I owed Patrick fifty dollars.

or an **adverb**.
—When the Mets are playing, the stadium is full.
or as an **adjective**.
—The fact that I ate for dinner made me grumpy.

Elliptical clause: a type of dependent clause with a subject and verb that are implied rather than expressed.
—Although unhappy, she still smiled.
In the clause *Although unhappy*, the subject and verb are implied. *Although* is the word *unhappy*.

- 4. Phrase:** a group of related words without a subject or predicate.

Noun phrase: a phrase that acts as a noun.
A noun phrase can function as a **subject**.
—The smiling dog showed against its chin.

object.
—He gave her the book of poems.

prepositional object.
—The accident fell into the safety net.

gerund phrase.
—Swimming the sea can be a popular activity in Argentina.

infinitive phrase.
—To dream is to be human.

Adjective phrase: a phrase that modifies nouns or pronouns. Participial phrases and many prepositional phrases are adjective phrases.
—The actor playing Puck felt much to be desired.

Adverb phrase: a phrase that begins with a preposition, and that functions as an adverb.
—The teacher was crowded with the actor's fans.

Prepositional phrase: a phrase made up of a preposition, its object, and its modifiers.
—The roof of the old theater was leaking badly.

- 5. Modifier:** a word or phrase that modifies or adds information to other parts of a sentence. Adjectives, adverbs, and many phrases and clauses are modifiers.

Limiting modifier: a word or phrase that limits the scope or degree of an idea. Words like *almost*, *only*, or *scarcely* are modifiers.
—It was almost time for dinner.

Restricting modifier: a phrase or clause that restricts the meaning of what it modifies and is necessary to the idea of its sentence.
—Any dog that has not had its shots should be taken to a veterinarian immediately.

Nonrestricting modifier: a modifier that adds information but is not necessary to the sentence. Commas, dashes, or parentheses set apart nonrestricting modifiers.
—Seventeenth-century poets, many of whom were also devout Christians, wrote excellent poetry.

—He could hear the singing bird—a wren, perhaps, or a robin—throughout the forest.

TYPES OF SENTENCES

- 1. Sentences can be defined according to their content or intention.**

Declarative sentence: a sentence that states a fact or an idea.
—The police officer stopped the man in the red car because he was speeding.

Interrogative sentence: a sentence that asks a question and ends in a question mark.
—Where are the songs of spring?

Imperative sentence: a sentence that issues a command or makes a request.
—Please bring me the newspaper.

Exclamatory sentence: a sentence that issues a command or makes a statement, observation. Exclamation points should not punctuate declarative sentences.
—What a long day!
—Get away from me!

- 2. Sentences also can be defined according to their structure.**

Simple sentence: a sentence made up of a single independent clause.
—It is a beautiful day.

Compound sentence: a sentence made up of two independent clauses connected by a conjunction.
—It is a beautiful day, and I'm eager to go outside.

Complex sentence: a sentence made up of one or more dependent clauses connected to an independent clause.
—Because it is a beautiful day, I'm eager to go outside.

Compound-complex sentence: a sentence made up of multiple independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.
—It was sunny, and because it is a beautiful day, I'm eager to go outside.

COMMON GRAMMATICAL MISTAKES

- 1. Dangling modifier:** a modifying word or phrase that is not properly matched with the word it modifies. Dangling modifiers often occur at the beginnings of sentences.
—Smiling north, the trees get smaller.
In this sentence, *Smiling north* is meant to describe the person who travels, but instead it describes *trees*, which don't travel at all. One correct version would be:
—Smiling north, I notice that the trees get smaller.

- 2. Squinting modifier:** a modifier that is placed ambiguously, so that it is unclear whether it modifies the word before it or the word after it.
—People who travel in Europe often prefer to stay in affordable hotels.
This could mean either "People who travel often in Europe prefer to stay in affordable hotels" or "Often, people who travel in Europe prefer to stay in affordable hotels."

- 3. Premature conclusions:** pronouns that do not have clear antecedents make sentences confusing.
—Jacob called a neighbor to ask about his car.

He could refer to Jacob or the neighbor. A correct version would be:
—Jacob called a neighbor to ask about the neighbor's car.

- 4. Split infinitives:** when possible, no words should come between *to* and the main verb in an infinitive.
—~~Incorrect:~~ He decided to boldly go where no man had gone before.
—~~Correct:~~ He decided to go boldly where no man had gone before.

- 5. Comma splicing:** joining two independent clauses with a comma rather than a semicolon or period creates a run-on sentence.
—~~Incorrect:~~ Many people think I'm tall, they don't realize I wear platform shoes.
—~~Correct:~~ Many people think I'm tall, they don't realize I wear platform shoes.

- 6. Double negatives:** when applied to the same word or phrase, two negative modifiers confuse the meaning of the sentence.
—~~Incorrect:~~ I haven't hardly begun to think of my plans for next year.
—~~Correct:~~ I have hardly begun to think of my plans for next year.

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