

## Sentence Structure Review Information Sheet

### How Do I Use Varied Sentence Structure?

**Don't make these first three mistakes when you write:**

#### **1) Do Not Create Sentence Fragments (SF)**

A sentence is like a math equation. It has a very specific way that it is formed and put together. A complete sentence expresses an idea, or ideas, and must have at least one subject (does action) and at least one predicate (the action being done.)

**Example:** "The one with the long hair." is a sentence fragment, as there is a subject (the one), but there is no predicate (what did the subject do?)

To correct sentence fragments, ask yourself, "Have I got a doer and what is being done by the doer?" You need both parts to have a complete sentence. I ran. (complete sentence because "I" is the subject and "ran" is the predicate (action)).

#### **2) Do Not Create Run-on Sentences/Comma Splices (R-O)**

What are they?

These occur when you don't join two or more different ideas together properly. The ideas keep going without proper pauses, joiners, or stops and they confuse the reader.

So, to summarize, a complete sentence is an independent clause that can stand alone, and must have a subject (doer) and a predicate (action).

#### **3) Do Not Begin Sentences with Conjunctions**

"And," "But," and "Because" are joining conjunctions, and are meant to join two related ideas together, so do not use them to begin sentences. Instead, use the words: "However, ..." or "In addition, ..." or "Furthermore, ..."

Notice that you will need a comma after each to separate it, as these are what we call transitional words, and the voice should pause after reading them.

### Things to Know:

Independent clause - a complete thought that can stand alone

Dependent clause - a phrase or group of words that cannot stand alone

**The three types of sentence structures are simple, compound, and complex.**

**1) Simple** - one independent clause that must have a subject and a predicate

**Example:** John (subject) worked (predicate) very quickly on his project. (One independent clause - one idea)

2) **Compound** - must have at least two independent clauses that are related to the same idea, and are joined by an idea "joiner."

### Examples of Compound Sentences:

Remember that when you join two related ideas together, both ideas must be complete thoughts, or independent clauses. You have three options.

(1) use a comma AND a conjunction

(2) use a dash ("em-dash" created by typing two hyphens together or some computer programs will create the em-dash by holding down the Alt and Shift keys before typing the hyphen)

(3) use a semicolon (do know that to use a semicolon, both sides of it must be independent clauses and as such, each must be able to stand alone.) When you use a dash or a semicolon, they replace the comma and conjunction, and you do not use a conjunction then, but only the dash or the semicolon

### Examples:

**Comma + conjunction:** I wanted to go to my friend's house, **but** my parents said I could not go. (both sides are independent clauses, and if you ignore the comma and joining conjunction, each related idea can stand alone.)

**Semicolon:** I wanted to go to my friend's house; my parents said I could not go.

(Both sides are independent clauses and can stand alone.)

**Dash:** I wanted to go to my friend's house—I had to stay home and do my chores!

(Both sides are independent clauses and can stand alone.)

To make a dash (really called an "em-dash") you type two hyphens together, and sometimes the program will run them together like this, and sometimes it will not, but you just leave it as two hyphens, if it doesn't automatically join together.

3) **Complex:** must have at least one independent clause and at least one dependent clause, which often gives extra information. This extra information/dependent clause cannot stand alone, as it is not a complete thought, and it is usually offset in commas depending where it is located within the sentence.

**Example:** John worked very quickly, as he did every Saturday, on his project.

(independent clause)                      (dependent clause)

**Example:** After the plane took off, I immediately began to miss my parents.

(dependent clause)

(independent clause)

Rather than a comma or commas, a dash, really known as the "em-dash," may also be used to separate an independent clause from a dependent clause.

**Example:** I had finished all my chores—took me hours!!

(independent clause)

(dependent clause)

Using Ellipsis as Punctuation: How can I use ellipsis in my writing?

**Examples:**

Although it is not the success in the rodeo arena that we had together that makes him so significant to me...it's the fire and passion he lit in me!

Note that either ellipsis or a dash would work well in the last example.

I knew my friend missed me too....

Use ellipsis where you want the reader to think further or to "draw between the lines."

Using varied sentence structure is very important. You will want to demonstrate that you have the writing skills to create all types of correct sentences. Some punctuation marks such as the semicolon, dash, or ellipsis should be used sparingly, as overuse will make your writing "overdone." Try to use each of these punctuation marks only once each in most essay work. You may use commas as often as you wish in your writing when they are correctly placed.