

# Types of Sentences

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## Definitions:

Sentence: A unit of language that is marked by a capital letter at the beginning and final punctuation at the end (a period, an exclamation point, or a question mark). In English, a sentence is as simple as a subject and a verb, but it could be as complex as containing multiple clauses and many units of punctuation (commas, colons, semicolons, dashes, quotation marks, etc.).

- Example: The tree is alive.
- Example: The tree, which grows taller every year, is alive and well this summer season; however, it hasn't rained yet this month, and I fear it will not do well with a longer drought.

Clause: A unit of language that is contained by punctuation. There are two types of clauses: independent and dependent.

Independent Clause: A unit of language that contains a subject and a verb, which therefore, can act as a complete simple sentence.

- The tree is alive.
- The tree [...] is alive and well this summer season.
- It hasn't rained yet this month.
- I fear it will not do well with a longer drought.

Dependent Clause: A unit of language that cannot exist on its own because it acts as a modifying component to an independent clause.

- ...which grows taller every year...

## The Four Types of Sentences:

### *Simple*

A simple sentence contains one independent clause with no dependent clause.

- Example: The sky is blue.
- Example: Her hair is brown.
- Example: It was a great day.

### *Compound*

A compound sentence contains multiple independent clauses but not dependent clauses. Independent clauses can be joined in two main ways:

1. by a comma and a coordinating conjunction
  - a. Michigan's capital is Lansing, and its state bird is the robin.
  - b. Michigan's capital is Lansing, but its most populous area is Detroit.
2. by a semi-colon
  - a. Michigan's capital is Lansing; its state bird is the robin.
  - b. Michigan's capital is Lansing; its most populous area, however, is Detroit.

### *Complex*

A complex sentence contains an independent clause with at least one dependent clause.

- Example: Grand Valley, which is a liberal arts university, offers students a diverse learning experience.
- Example: At Grand Valley, students can take a wide variety of classes before they graduate
- Example: Even if it means prolonging graduation, many students try out a couple of majors before picking one.

### *Compound-Complex*

The compound-complex sentence contains multiple independent clauses and at least one dependent clause

- Example: English sentences come in a variety of forms, which can sometimes be really difficult to learn, especially if one is an adult, yet the complexity of the language makes it really beautiful.

Be sure to check out our other helpful handouts for more information on sentences and sentence types:

- Commas
- The Colon
- Run-on Sentences
- Sentence Fragments

The information on the page was brought to you, in part, by the Purdue OWL page, Sentence Types.