

A TOOL TO UNDERSTAND SENTENCE  
STRUCTURE FOR EXPLICIT, SYSTEMATIC  
INSTRUCTION

# The Anatomy of a Sentence

## Phrase

### A UNIT OF A CLAUSE OR SENTENCE

A phrase is a group of words that work together but are not a complete clause or sentence. There are many different types of phrases; the most common are: noun phrases (e.g., the challenging math problem), verb phrases (e.g., have been running), prepositional phrases (e.g., around the library), and participle phrases (e.g., demonstrating an experiment).

Ex: *The confident student*

## Complete Clause

### CONTAINS A SUBJECT (WHO/WHAT) AND A PREDICATE (IS DOING WHAT)

A complete clause includes a **subject** (often a noun or pronoun) and a **predicate** (a verb or verb phrase). Some teachers simplify this as a "who (or what) and a do" or a "namer" and an "action word". There are two categories of clauses: *independent*, which can stand on their own, and *dependent*, which cannot stand on their own.

Ex: *The confident student wrote a sentence.* (independent)  
Ex: *before the confident student wrote a sentence* (dependent)

## Compound Sentence

### TWO INDEPENDENT CLAUSES JOINED BY A COORDINATING CONJUNCTION, A SEMICOLON, OR A CONJUNCTIVE ADVERB

A compound sentence consists of two *independent* clauses. A compound sentence consists of an independent clause, a comma, a **coordinating conjunction** (e.g., for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) and another independent clause. Each clause **MUST** have at least one subject and one verb. If they do not, a comma is **NOT** needed. The subjects are underlined:

Ex: *The confident student learned to write well, so his reading comprehension also improved.*

A **semicolon** may also be used to separate two independent clauses in a compound sentence.

Ex: *The confident student learned to write well; his reading comprehension also improved.*

A **conjunctive adverb** can also be used in a compound sentence, after the semicolon. Be sure to have a complete clause, semicolon, conjunctive adverb, comma, and complete clause.

Ex: *The confident student learned to write well; therefore, his reading comprehension also improved.*

## Complex Sentence

### DEPENDENT CLAUSE, INDEPENDENT CLAUSE (D,I) INDEPENDENT CLAUSE DEPENDENT CLAUSE (ID)

A complex sentence consists of at least one *dependent clause* and an *independent clause*. Dependent clauses begin with a *subordinating conjunction* and cannot stand on their own. A dependent clause can either begin the sentence, in which case a comma is needed to separate the clauses, or it can be the second clause, in which case a comma is not needed.

Ex: *Since the confident student learned to write well, his reading comprehension also improved.* (D,I)  
Ex: *The confident student's reading comprehension improved since he learned to write well.* (ID)

## Compound-Complex Sentence

### 2 INDEPENDENT CLAUSES AND 1 (OR MORE) DEPENDENT CLAUSES

A compound-complex sentence consists of 2 independent clauses and 1 or more dependent clauses. There are many different constructions possible for compound-complex sentences.

Ex: *When the confident student began his essay, he started by brainstorming his ideas, and then he determined his topic.* (D, I, and I)

# For Your Reference

Knowing and fully understanding these little words is essential for skilled writing AND reciprocally critical for comprehending complex texts

## Parts of Speech

### NOUNS, VERBS, ADJECTIVES, AND ADVERBS

**Nouns** give a person, place, thing, or idea a name.

**Verbs** are action words or express a state of being such as helping or linking verbs.

**Adjectives** describe a noun, and **adverbs** often modify a verb.

You need at least one noun and at least one verb to make a complete clause. Explicitly teaching suffixes that denote the part of speech of a word is helpful to understand words, sentences, and spelling.

## Prepositions

### SHOW DIRECTION, LOCATION, OR TIME

These parts of speech can come before nouns and pronouns to create a prepositional phrase, which adds detail to sentences.

Examples: of, in, to, for, with, on, at, from, by, about, as, into, like, through, after, over, between, out, against, during, without, before, under, around, among

Ex: in the hall, during lunch, among the elements

## Coordinating Conjunctions

### TO JOIN TWO CLAUSES IN A COMPOUND SENTENCE

Learn and know the *comma* FANBOYS!

**For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So**

It is important to support student understanding of the relationship of the clauses when you use each of these words (e.g., *and* adds information, *but* offers a contrast or introduces something unexpected).

## Conjunctive Adverbs

### TO JOIN TWO CLAUSES IN A COMPOUND SENTENCE WITH A SEMICOLON

Once students understand the anatomy of a compound sentence using the FANBOYS, they are ready to learn that a semicolon can also be the glue between two complete clauses.

They can also use a coordinating conjunction after a semicolon. These elevate student writing and boost confidence! Some conjunctions to teach include: however, nevertheless, hence, likewise, consequently, and similarly.

Ex: The students felt proud using conjunctive adverbs; likewise, their parents were impressed.

## Subordinate Conjunctions

### TO JOIN TWO CLAUSES IN A COMPLEX SENTENCE

These important connective words come at the beginning of a dependent clause and are also important to understand the relationship between the clauses these words create.

When a dependent clause is first, use a comma to separate clauses.

**Addition/Sequence:** after, also, before, until, when, while

**Cause/Effect:** as long as, as soon as, because, consequently, finally, since, therefore

**Conditionality:** if/then, in case, insofar as, only if, provided that, unless, until

**Reversal:** although, even if, even though, instead