



SENTENCE STRUCTURE

What Is a Sentence?

A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete idea. Every sentence must have at least two parts:

- a subject (who or what the sentence is about)
- a verb (what the subject does or is)

Example:

The student studies for exams.

Why Is Sentence Structure Important?

Clear sentences help your reader understand your ideas. In college writing, unclear or incorrect sentences can make your work difficult to follow.

Complete Sentences

A complete sentence includes both a subject and a verb and expresses a complete idea.

Example:

Students need time to complete their assignments.

Sentence Fragments

A fragment is an incomplete sentence. It may be missing a subject, a verb, or a complete thought.

Example Fragment:

Because students are busy.

Fix: Because students are busy, they need good time management skills.

Run-On Sentences

A run-on sentence contains two or more complete ideas that are not correctly connected.

Example Run-On:

Students are busy they often feel stressed.

Fix 1 (add a comma and coordinating conjunction): Students are busy, so they often feel stressed.

Fix 2 (separate into two sentences): Students are busy. They often feel stressed.

Types of Sentences

Each type of sentence helps you vary your writing and express ideas more clearly.

Simple Sentence:

A sentence with one complete idea.

Example: Students study every day.

Compound Sentence:

Two complete sentences (each with a subject and verb) joined by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so—also known as FANBOYS).

Example: Students study every day, and they attend classes regularly.

Complex Sentence:

A sentence with one main clause and one dependent clause.

Example: Because students are busy, they must manage their time carefully.

Common Sentence Errors

Missing Subjects:

Example: Went to class early.

Fix: I went to class early.

Missing Verbs:

Example: The students in the library.

Fix: The students are in the library.

Unclear Meaning:

Example: They did it, which was confusing.

Fix: The students completed the assignment, which confused their instructor.

Tips for Clear Sentences

- Make sure every sentence has a subject and a verb
- Check that your sentence expresses a complete idea
- Avoid very long, confusing sentences
- Read your sentences out loud to check clarity

Final Takeaway

Clear, complete sentences are the foundation of strong writing. When your sentences are easy to understand, your ideas will be easier for your reader to follow.