

There are four main sentence types in English, and the types with multiple clauses each have more than one way of being organized. This resource outlines sentence errors that can occur and the correct ways to form

Sentence Problems:

- **Sentence Fragment:** A sentence fragment is incomplete because it is missing either a subject or a verb, or because it begins with a subordinating conjunction and is not connected to an independent clause.
- **Run-on Sentence:** A run-on sentence is two (or more) independent clauses (complete sentences) that have been joined incorrectly, usually without punctuation or appropriate transition.
- **Comma Splice Error:** A comma splice error occurs when two independent clauses are joined by a comma and no coordinating conjunction.

Sentence Types:

1. **Simple** (independent clause with one subject and one verb)



2. **Compound** (two independent clauses)

Canadians **love** hockey, *but* they also **play** lacrosse.

There are three possible sentence patterns for combining two independent clauses into a compound sentence:

A. Independent clause + comma + *coordinating conjunction* + independent clause.

Example: The results are inconclusive, *and* more research is needed.

B. Independent clause + semicolon (;) + *conjunctive adverb* + comma + independent clause.

Example: The results are inconclusive; *therefore*, more research is needed.

Conjunctive Adverbs			
accordingly	furthermore	moreover	still
also	hence however	nevertheless	subsequently
besides	indeed	next	then
consequently	instead	nonetheless	therefore
conversely	likewise	otherwise	thus
finally	meanwhile	similarly	

C. Independent clause + semicolon (;) + independent clause.

Example: The results are inconclusive; more research is needed.

3. Complex (one independent clause and one dependent clause)

Complex sentences contain a dependent clause that begins with a subordinating conjunction.

Subordinating Conjunctions				
after	even though	since	until	whether
although	if	so that	when	while
as	in order that	than	whenever	why
because	once	that	where	
before	provided that	though	whereas	
even if	rather than	unless	wherever	

The dependent clause can be positioned either at the beginning or at the end of a sentence. There are four possible sentence patterns for joining a dependent clause and an independent clause to form a complex sentence:

A. *Dependent clause* + comma + independent clause.

Although the research was inconclusive, we can make a few general assumptions based on the results.

B. Independent clause + *dependent clause*.

We can make a few general assumptions based on the research results *even though they were inconclusive*.

C. Independent clause+ *nonessential dependent clause* (middle of independent clause, describing “research”).

The research, *which was conclusive*, allows us to make several important connections.

OR Independent clause + comma + *nonessential dependent clause*.

We can make several important connections based on our research results, *which were conclusive*.

D. Independent clause + *essential dependent clause* (middle of independent clause, describing “results”).

Research results *that are conclusive* can be used to make important connections.

4. Compound-Complex (two independent clauses, plus a dependent clause)

Compound-complex sentences are made up of combinations of the sentence types above.

Tip:

Use the sentence type that best shows connections between your ideas and has an appropriate amount of impact for your reader. Try to use a variety of sentence types, and limit your sentences to two or three clauses maximum for good length and clarity. The average sentence length for academic writing is 21–23 words.