

## 1 Here's the Idea

A sentence's structure is determined by the number and kind of clauses it contains.

- **The structure of a sentence may be simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex.**

### Simple Sentences

A **simple sentence** consists of one independent clause and no subordinate clauses.

**Two friends** **invented** the first trivia game.

A simple sentence may have a compound subject or verb.

**Chris Haney and Scott Abbott** **created and marketed** it.

COMPOUND SUBJECT

COMPOUND VERB

For more on compound sentence parts, see pp. 42–43.

### Compound Sentences

In a **compound sentence** two or more independent clauses are joined together.

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

**Bette Nesmith typed on an electric typewriter, and she often made mistakes.**

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

Independent clauses can be joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction, a semicolon, or a semicolon with a conjunctive adverb and a comma.

**She could have erased them, but that took a lot of time.**

**Nesmith did not erase her errors; she covered them with a mixture of water and white paint.**

**Nesmith was not happy with the name "paper correction fluid"; consequently, she gave the mixture a catchy brand name.**

For more on conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs, see pp. 26–27.

Avoid using commas to join independent clauses that should be separate sentences. For more on "comma splices," see page 120.



## Complex Sentences

A **complex sentence** contains one independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses.

SUBORDINATE CLAUSE

If cockleburrs had not clung to his jacket, George de Mestral might never have invented Velcro.

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

He was curious to know the reason why they clung so tightly.

SUBORDINATE CLAUSE

## Compound-Complex Sentences

A **compound-complex sentence** contains two or more independent clauses and one or more subordinate clauses.

SUBORDINATE CLAUSE

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

When de Mestral studied the burs, he saw tiny hooks on their surfaces becoming entangled in loops of fiber, and this observation inspired him to invent the hook-and-loop fastener.

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

SUBORDINATE CLAUSE

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

While another might have been annoyed, he was intrigued, and he thought of a use to which the phenomenon could be put.

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

SUBORDINATE CLAUSE

## 2 Why It Matters in Writing

By using compound sentences to connect main ideas and complex sentences to add subordinate ideas, you can express complicated thoughts clearly and achieve sentence variety.

### STUDENT MODEL

Kurt Vonnegut's story "Harrison Bergeron" is about a futuristic society in which people are forced to be equal. In this society, no one is allowed to be bright, and no one is allowed to be talented. These qualities are forbidden because they threaten the equality policy of those who are in power. However, one person—Harrison Bergeron—demands that his uniqueness be acknowledged.

SUBORDINATE  
IDEAS

CONNECTED  
MAIN IDEAS