

# English Sentence Structure Review - TASK

Grammar – Grammatical & Syntactic Accuracy

This task-focused material helps you notice sentence structures in English. You can work individually and ask your ASK Tutor for feedback on your answers in a tutorial.

## AIMS OF THE TASK/ SELF-LESSON

1. To revise and practice **simple sentence structure** in English.
2. To revise and practice **compound sentence structure** in English.

**Task 1a** Which of the following are not sentences? Why not?

- a) We still have no agreement on the purpose of higher education.
- b) This should not be surprising.
- c) After all, is very old.
- d) Writing in the 16th century, Francis Bacon insisted that knowledge should be practical and "not be a courtesan, for pleasure" then more recently, John Cardinal Newman took the opposite view and said "Useful knowledge is trash."
- e) Consensus on the purposes of higher education.

**Task 1b** What is a sentence? Complete the two sentences below.

- a) A sentence is.....
- b) A sentence in English needs.....

When reading your work, you should be able to identify these components in your sentences. If you cannot, your sentence will lack structure.

In English there are four basic kinds of sentence:

- The simple sentence
- The compound sentence
- The complex sentence
- The compound – complex sentence

### Simple sentences

A simple sentence has only one clause. It can be as short as only two components:

subject	+ verb
a) John	slept.
b) Opinions on the role of universities in the twenty-first century	differ.
c) The cost of education in the UK	has tripled.

The verbs in these sentences are intransitive. What do transitive/intransitive mean? Why is the distinction important? **MAKE SURE YOU ASK YOUR TUTOR ABOUT THIS**

**Transitive =**

**Intransitive =**

Simple sentences using transitive verbs have 3 components

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Object</b>
a) We	(still) have	no consensus on the purpose of higher education.
b) This	should not be	Surprising.
c) The clash of values	is	very old.

Simple sentences can have more than one subject and/or more than one verb:

a) John	lives and works	in Bow.
b) The clash of values and the conflict between ideas	should not be	surprising.
c) The clash of values and the conflict between ideas	is not and should not be	surprising.

\* This simple structure is very common in academic writing particularly when conveying complex information. If the subject is an information-laden subject (noun phrase) simple sentences work well:

<b><u>Subject</u></b>	<b><u>Verb</u></b>	<b><u>Prepositional phrase</u></b>
The analysis of data by a team of scientists in the lab	was undertaken	before writing a report.

## Compound sentences

**Task 2** – read and comment on the 3 extracts in the box. Are they grammatically correct? Would you like to change them or leave them as they are? **MAKE SURE YOU ASK YOUR TUTOR ABOUT THIS**

- a) The ancient clash between each student's short-term and long-term goals divides the outside critics. It divides the students, too.
- b) (of the benefits of a university education) Students are exposed to the habit of lifelong learning. There are also the economic outcomes already mentioned.
- c) The structure of the contemporary University is changing rapidly. We have yet to understand what precisely these changes will mean.

Too many consecutive short simple sentences sounds simplistic, suggesting either the writer cannot cope with large amounts of information or they believe their readers cannot (think about your first books in English. This is how they were probably written).

**Task 3** Compare to the original version and highlight the changes

- a) The ancient clash between each student's short-term and long-term goals divides the outside critics and divides the students, too.
- b) Students are exposed to the habit of lifelong learning, and of course, there are the economic outcomes already mentioned.
- c) The structure of the contemporary university is changing rapidly, and we have yet to understand what precisely these changes will mean.

In the examples above, the writers have combined two independent clauses with 'and'. Is it possible to combine them with a comma? A semi-colon?

**There are three ways to join the clauses:**

**1. With a co-ordinator** ( for, but, and, or, nor, yet, so)

**Example:** *John lives in Bow, so he can walk to work at the university.*

**2. With a conjunction**

**Example:** *John lives in Bow; therefore he can walk to work at the University.*

**3. With a semi-colon\***

**Example:** *John lives in Bow; he can walk to work at the University.*

**Task 4** Look back at the 3 examples above. Which could you use a semi-colon for? Would you add a conjunction to make the meaning more explicit? You may want to rephrase the second clause.

**Task 5** Use one of the 7 co-ordinators (*for, but, and, or, nor, yet, so*) to join these sentences.

a. Nuclear accidents can happen. Nuclear power plants must have strict safety controls.

.....

b. The accident at the nuclear power plant at Three Mile Island in the United States created fears about the safety of this source of energy. The disaster at Chernobyl in the former Soviet Union confirmed them.

.....

c. Solar heating systems are economical to operate. The cost of installation is very high.

.....

d. Energy needs are not going to decrease. Energy sources are not going to increase.

.....

e. Burning fossil fuels causes serious damage to our planet. We need to develop other sources of energy.

.....

f. Ecologists know that burning fossil fuels causes holes in the ozone layer. People continue to do it.

.....

**Compound sentences made with a conjunction**

*John lives in Bow; **therefore** he can walk to work at the University.*

This construction works well when both independent clauses are fairly short. Remember there must be a clear correlation between the two clauses.

**Task 6** The conjunctions in the boxes below can all be used in the construction above. Label the groups of conjunctions using the titles below. **MAKE SURE YOU ASK YOUR TUTOR ABOUT THIS**

To add an example	To add a similar idea	To add a complete contrast
To give an alternative possibility	To add an expected result	To add something unexpected

	<b>Also, Besides, Furthermore, In addition, Moreover</b> <b>As well</b> (at the end of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> clause) <b>Too</b> (at the end of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> clause)
	<b>However, Nevertheless, Nonetheless, Still,</b>
	<b>On the other hand, In contrast,</b>
	<b>Otherwise,</b>
	<b>Accordingly, As a result, Thus Consequently, Hence, Therefore,</b>
	<b>For example, For instance,</b>

**Task 7** Make compound sentences below by adding a second clause after the conjunction.

- a. The university campus is located near Stratford; therefore, it is very easy to go shopping after class.
- b. Students must pay their fees before they register for class; otherwise,  
 .....

- c. In many subjects at UK universities, a score of 70+ is equivalent to an A grade; however, .....
  
- d. My friend scored a high mark in the English diagnostic test; as a result, .....
  
- e. The class thought the teacher would give a test last Friday; consequently, .....

**NB all of these compound sentences could be divided into two:**

Example: *The university campus is located near Stratford. Therefore, it is very easy to go shopping after class.*

For the example above do you prefer one sentence or two?

**Compound sentences joined with semi-colons**

Example: *John lives in Bow; he can walk to work at the University.*

A third way to join compound sentences is with semi-colons. Be careful here; both independent clauses must be closely related. If not, they should be written as two independent, simple sentences.

**Task 8** Decide if the two independent clauses can be separated by a semi-colon or not. If not, why not? **MAKE SURE YOU ASK YOUR TUTOR ABOUT THIS**

- a. The practice of yoga strengthens the body and promotes flexibility it also strengthens the mind and refreshes the soul.
  
- b. Motherhood causes some women to quit their jobs others continue working despite having young children to care for.
  
- c. The government is trying to increase the number of young people in high education. Some academics believe the target will lower standards.

### Complex sentences

The sentences in the box are called complex because they contain an independent clause and a dependent clause. Look at the examples and decide which is which and why.

Highlight the subordinating conjunction: **MAKE SURE YOU ASK YOUR TUTOR ABOUT THIS**

- a) Lawyers can advance the cause of formal justice while doctors promote health.
- b) Although more women and minority-group members have been to university in recent years, social fairness has thus far proved to be an elusive goal.
- c) By encouraging students from all backgrounds to come to university, universities can do more than almost any other institution to improve social mobility and justice.

Can this ever be a sentence? > *While doctors promote health.*

A subordinating conjunction joins two clauses or ideas in such a way as to make one grammatically dependent on the other. In the example above 'while' is a subordinating conjunction. The clause is no longer independent.

Some subordinating conjunctions:

*after, although, as, because, before, how, if, in order to, once, since, that, unless, until, where, whether, when*

**Task 9:** Complete the sentences using a subordinating conjunction

- a) The question of 'what universities are for' is complex.....
- b) It is too simplistic to say universities exist to educate people.....
- c) Many students attend university .....
- d) According to the UK government, universities .....
- e) Cleveland (cited in Schwartz, 2003) claimed that academics see the aim of university education as self-fulfillment..... (how do 'outsiders' see it?)

**Task 10**

Improve the coherence of the following text by combining simple sentences where you can – try to use each of the three methods at least once. (There are many possible solutions to this task). **MAKE SURE YOU ASK YOUR TUTOR ABOUT THIS**

**Robots**

(1) A robot is a mechanical device that can perform boring, dangerous and difficult tasks. (2) First of all, robots can perform repetitive tasks without becoming tired or bored. (3) They are used in automobile factories to weld and paint. (4) Robots can also function in hostile environments. (5) They are useful for exploring the ocean bottom as well as deep outer space. (6) Finally robots can perform tasks requiring pinpoint accuracy. (7) In the operating room, robotic equipment can assist the surgeon. (8) For instance, a robot can kill a brain tumour. (9) It can operate on a foetus with great precision. (10) The field of artificial intelligence is giving robots a limited ability to think and to make decisions. (11) However, robots cannot think conceptually. (12) Robots cannot function independently. (13) Humans have to programme them. (14) They are useless. (15) Therefore, humans should not worry that robots will take over the world, at least not yet.

**Materials used:** Tasks 5 and 8 from Oshima, A and Hogue, A (2006) *Writing Academic English*