**BASIC SENTENCE STRUCTURE**

**Some of the biggest grammar problems in English occur because students don’t know the types of sentences. Let’s look at the four basic sentence types in English.**

**I. The first type is the simple sentence.** To be a sentence in English, you need a subject and a verb. For example, women like to shop. A simple sentence could also contain 2 subjects + 1 verb. Some women and men like to shop. A simple sentence could contain 1 subject + 2 verbs. Some women like to shop and talk a lot.

Here is what a simple sentence would like in simple chart form:

Simple sentence

1S + 1V

2S + 1V

1S + 2V

**II. The second sentence type is the compound sentence.** A compound sentence is two sentences. In between those two sentences, you can have what many call fanboys. Fanboys is not a word in English. It is just a simple way to remember the words that connect two sentences; those words are called coordinating conjunctions.

a. SV , fanboys SV

F – for A – and N – nor B – but O – or Y – yet S – so

If the first sentence is long, we need to put a comma before the fanboys. What would we consider long? Typically, if the sentence goes to the second line when typed, we would consider that long and put a comma. If the first sentence doesn’t go to the second line, we don’t have to put a comma.

b. In between two sentences, we can also use a semicolon (;). A semicolon means that the two sentences are closely related. However, we don’t like to use semicolons because they prevent us from doing sophisticated grammatical structures. As a general rule, use only 1 semicolon per every 2 to 3 pages.

SV ; SV

c. If the sentences aren’t closely related, we can use a semicolon and add a transition to connect them. The transition helps logically connect them and the semicolon grammatically connects them. You cannot put just a transition between two sentences. This example is wrong. For example, men like to watch sports however women don’t like to watch sports. You need a semicolon after the first sentence. For example, men like to watch sports; however, women don’t like to watch sports. After transitions, we always need a comma and that is why there is a comma after however.

Here is the chart for compound sentences

SV, fanboys SV

SV ; SV

SV; transition, SV

**III. The third sentence type is the complex sentence.** A complex sentence is a simple sentence plus at least one clause. There are three types of clauses in English: adverb clause, adjective clause and noun clause.

Women love to go to the mall because they like to shop. The sentence is women love to go to the mall and the clause is because they like to shop.

We will talk in more detail after each type of clause.

Here is a chart for complex.

SV + at least one clause

**IV. The fourth type of sentence is the compound-complex sentence.** A compound sentence is two sentences and the complex is at least one clause. So, a compound-complex sentence contains two sentences + at least one clause. For example, this sentence is a compound-complex sentence.

Women love to go to the mall and they like to talk about the clothes that they bought after they go shopping. The two sentences are “Women love to go to the mall and they like to talk about the clothes” and there are also two clauses: that they bought after they go shopping.

We will talk in more detail after each type of clause so right now don’t worry about identifying clauses.

**Here is a summary for compound-complex:**

**Two sentences + at least one clause**

**V.Summary of the Sentence Types.** Now, let’s look at a summary for all 4 sentence types.

**Sentence types. There are four sentence types: simple, compound, complex and compound- complex.**

1. **Simple 3. Complex**

1S + 1V 1 simple sentence + at least one clause (adjective, adverb or noun)

2S + 1V

1S + 2V

1. **Compound 4. Compound-complex**

SV (,fanboys) SV one compound + at least one clause

SV ; SV This sentence is two sentences + at least 1 clause

SV; transition, SV

One compound = two sentences

The two sentences can be joined in one of three ways:

With , fanboys

With a semicolon - ;

With a ; transition,

**VI. Let’s now do an exercise on identifying sentence types. To identify sentence types, you need to ask yourself a couple of questions:**

**1.Do you have fanboys or a semicolon with 2 sentences?**

If yes, you have a compound-complex sentence?

Do you also have a clause like who/which/that or when/because and although?

If yes, you have a compound-complex sentence?

If not, you have a compound sentence?

**2.If you don’t have fanboys or a semicolon with 2 sentences, you have a simple sentence or a complex sentence.**

**Do you have a clause like who/which/that or when/because and although?**

If yes, you have a complex sentence.

If not, you have a simple sentence.

**LET’S PRACTICE. Write simple, compound, complex or compound-complex in the space provided. Taken from comedian Rita Rudner.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_When a man says that he is ready to go out, it means that he is ready to go out.
2. \_\_\_\_\_When a woman says that she is ready to go out, it means that she WILL be ready to go out as soon as she finds her earrings, finishes putting on her makeup, etc.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Men see the telephone as a communication tool.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Men use the telephone to send short messages to other people.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ A woman can visit her girlfriend for two weeks, and as soon as she returns home, she will call the same friend and talk for three hours.
6. \_\_\_\_\_\_Men are vain; they will always check themselves out in a mirror.
7. \_\_\_\_\_\_Women are ridiculous because they will check out their reflections in any shiny surface (mirrors, spoons, store windows, toasters, a bald man’s head).
8. \_\_\_\_\_\_A man has six items in his bathroom, but the average number of items in the typical woman’s bathroom is 437.
9. \_\_\_\_\_\_Women get lost frequently, but they do ask for directions.