



The Compound-Complex Sentence

The compound-complex sentence combines elements of compound and complex sentences. It is the most sophisticated type of sentence you can use. Understanding how to construct the compound-complex sentence will help you take your writing to a new level of complexity.

Understanding Clauses

A clause is comprised of at least one subject and one verb. There are two types of clauses: the *independent* clause and the *dependent* clause.

Independent Clause

An independent clause makes a statement or asks a question that can act as a complete sentence.

Example: The dog barks.

Dependent Clause

A *dependent* clause cannot act as a complete sentence because it begins with a subordinating word, such as *when, because, if, whoever*, etc.

Example: When the dog barks.

All grammatically correct sentences have at least one independent clause, and, therefore, they have at least one subject and one verb.

Identifying Compound and Complex Sentences

The Compound Sentence

A compound sentence is made up of two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, or so*) and a comma or by a semicolon alone.

Example: The pirate captain lost her treasure map, but she still found the buried treasure.

The Complex Sentence

A complex sentence combines a dependent clause with an independent clause. When the dependent clause is placed before the independent clause, the two clauses are divided by a comma; otherwise, no punctuation is necessary.

Example: Because the soup was too cold, I warmed it in the microwave.

Constructing Compound-Complex Sentences

A compound-complex sentence is comprised of at least two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses.

Example: Though Mitchell prefers watching romantic films, he rented the latest spy thriller, and he enjoyed it very much.

Example: Laura forgot her friend's birthday, so she sent her a card when she finally remembered.

Because compound-complex sentences are normally longer than other sentences, it is very important to punctuate them correctly. Refer to your *Commas 101* handout for tips on correct comma usage.



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Exercise

With a partner or on your own, write five of your own compound-complex sentences in the space provided. Use the example below to help guide your writing. After you are finished, write one of your sentences on the board. As a group, we will determine if they are, in fact, compound-complex sentences.

Example: Begin with two independent clauses:

The team captain jumped for joy. The fans cheered.

Then combine the independent clauses to form a compound sentence:

The team captain jumped for joy, and the fans cheered.

Now, add a dependent clause to your compound sentence to create a compound-complex sentence.

The team captain jumped for joy, and the fans cheered because we won the state championship.

OR

When we won the state championship, the team captain jumped for joy, and the fans cheered.

For more practice, choose a passage from a book, newspaper, or magazine you are reading. Identify compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. By understanding how other writers use these types of sentences, you can improve your ability to craft your own compound-complex sentences.