



## Sentence Patterns

An easy way to avoid fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences is to recognize independent and dependent clauses in your sentence patterns and punctuate them accordingly.

### CLAUSES:

**Independent Clause:** a group of related words that contains both a subject and a verb and makes complete sense.

S      V

Ex: Cindy *skips* lunch at work.

**Dependent Clause:** a group of related words that also contains both a subject and a verb, but it cannot stand by itself and make complete sense; it is dependent upon an independent clause to make sense in a sentence. It often begins with a subordinating conjunction.

S      V

Ex: **Because** Cindy *skips* lunch at work

### SENTENCE STRUCTURES:

**Simple Sentence:** a sentence that contains one independent clause (It is basically a complete sentence that consists of a subject and verb.)

S      V

Ex: Cindy *skips* lunch at work.

**Compound Sentence:** a sentence that contains at least two independent clauses

S      V                      S      V

Ex: Cindy *skips* lunch at work, and she *is famished* at the end of the day.

**Complex Sentence:** a sentence that contains at least one independent clause and one dependent clause

S      V                      S      V

Ex: **Because** Cindy *skips* lunch at work, she *is famished* at the end of the day.

**Compound-Complex Sentence:** a sentence that contains at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause

Ex: **Because** <sup>S</sup> Cindy <sup>V</sup> *skips* lunch at work, <sup>S</sup> she <sup>V</sup> *is famished* at the end of the day,  
<sup>S</sup> so she <sup>V</sup> *stops* and <sup>V</sup> *gets* a burger on her way home.

Understanding these sentence structures will help you avoid errors such as fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences. Notice the following sentence patterns; pay particular attention to the punctuation patterns that can be used to join independent and dependent clauses.

## SENTENCE PATTERNS:

### 1. I C.

Ex: <sup>S</sup> Cindy <sup>V</sup> *skips* lunch at work.

An independent clause, which is a simple sentence, contains the essential elements of a complete sentence: a subject and a main verb. You can avoid fragments by making sure that each one of your sentence structures contains, at the very least, one independent clause.

### 2. I C . I C.

Ex: <sup>S</sup> Cindy <sup>V</sup> *skips* lunch at work. <sup>S</sup> She <sup>V</sup> *is famished* at the end of the day.

Because independent clauses can stand alone and make sense, you can simply separate the two with a period and let them stand alone as two simple sentences.

### 3. I C, coordinating conjunction I C.

Ex: <sup>S</sup> Cindy <sup>V</sup> *skips* lunch at work, **so** <sup>S</sup> she <sup>V</sup> *is famished* by the end of the day.

Omitting the comma in this pattern would create a run-on (I C I C = Run-on). Omitting the conjunction in this pattern would create a comma splice (I C , I C = Comma splice).

There are only seven coordinating conjunctions, and they are easy to remember. Just think of "FANBOYS."

**F**or  
**A**nd  
**N**or  
**B**ut  
**O**r  
**Y**et  
**S**o

#### 4. **IC ; IC.**

Ex: <sup>S</sup> Cindy <sup>V</sup> *skips* lunch at work; <sup>S</sup> she <sup>V</sup> *is famished*.

In this pattern, a semicolon functions just like a period, yet it allows you to keep two closely-related ideas in one sentence rather than separate them. The two ideas should be "balanced"; in other words, one independent clause should not be unusually longer than the other.

#### 5. **IC ; conjunctive adverb , IC.**

Ex: <sup>S</sup> Cindy <sup>V</sup> *skips* lunch at work; **consequently**, <sup>S</sup> she <sup>V</sup> *is famished* at the end of the day.

There is a lengthy list of conjunctive adverbs, but keep in mind that there are probably only a few that regularly appear in your writing, so use only those that you are familiar with and that accurately reflect the relationship of the ideas in your sentence. Omitting the punctuation in this pattern may create a comma splice or a run-on sentence.

#### 6. **DC , IC.**

Ex: **Because** <sup>S</sup> Cindy <sup>V</sup> *skips* lunch at work, <sup>S</sup> she <sup>V</sup> *is famished* at the end of the day.

If your sentence begins with a subordinating conjunction, such as "because," a comma must be placed before the independent clause that follows.

#### 7. **IC DC.**

Ex: <sup>S</sup> Cindy <sup>V</sup> *is famished* at the end of the day **because** <sup>S</sup> she <sup>V</sup> *skips* lunch at work.

Many writers will place a comma before the subordinating conjunction, especially the word "because," confusing it with "but." This is incorrect. No punctuation is needed for this sentence pattern.