Curtin University

Graduate Research Advanced Skills Program (GRASP)

Research Writing Series
Better sentences

Dr Petra Dumbell, Sem 2 2022

I acknowledge the Whadjuk Nyungar as the Custodians of the land on which I live and work. This Country was never ceded, it always was, and always will be Aboriginal land.

I pay my respects to Whadjuk Nyungar Elders past and present. I value their ancestral and continuing caring for Country practices and thank them for looking after this Country for so long.

I appreciate Indigenous ways of communication which are inclusive and respectful, and I recognise that this Country has been a place of teaching, research and learning for tens of thousands of years.

Sentence Basics

1. Simple sentence — control unit
2. Complex sentence — control unit + support unit
3. Compound sentence — control unit + control unit

Simple sentence

Control unit = subject + predicate

Subject

- contains the group of words that does or is something

Predicate

- … the group of the words expressing action (read, walk) or state of being (is, am, are, was, will be)
- contains the VERB.

Simple sentence

Control unit = subject + predicate

The sun shines.
The area under agricultural use is rapidly declining.
A new technique is being developed.
Climate science is a growing field of research.

The sun shines.
The area under agricultural use is rapidly declining.
A new technique is being developed.
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Complex sentence

Simple sentence: 1 control unit (subject + predicate)

Complex sentence = control unit + support unit

- The support unit
  - is a group of words adding more meaning to the control unit.
  - cannot function by itself – it needs the control unit.
  - begins with a word (called a ‘subordinator’)

Complex sentence

Complex sentence = control unit + support unit

Although his proposal was rejected, he went ahead with the research.
Results are largely unreproducible, which has led to a crisis of confidence in research.
The crisis of confidence in research, which the article talks about, is ongoing.

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Complex sentence

Common Subordinators for support units:

although	after	when
because	before	where
since	whenever	which
while	if	who
as	unless	whom
whereas	until	whose

Compound sentence

Simple sentence: 1 control unit (subject + predicate)
Complex sentence = control unit + support unit
Compound sentence = control unit + control unit (+ control unit…)

- A compound sentence has two or more control units

The interpretation of the data was difficult; the experiment contained too many variables.
The interpretation of the data was difficult, and the experiment contained too many variables.

Example 1

The smallest of the URF's (URFA6L), a 207-nucleotide (nt) reading frame overlapping out of phase the NH2 – terminal portion of the adenosinetriphosphatase (ATPase) subunit 6 gene, has been identified as the animal equivalent of the recently discovered yeast H+ - ATPase subunit 8 gene.

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(Gopen and Swan, 1990. P.553)

Example 1 edited

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The smallest of the URF's (URFA6L) **is a** 207-nucleotide (nt) reading frame overlapping out of phase the NH2 – terminal portion of the adenosinetriphosphatase (ATPase) subunit 6 gene**. It** has been identified as the animal equivalent of the recently discovered yeast H+ - ATPase subunit 8 gene.

(Gopen and Swan, 1990. P.553)

Example 2

Again at the time of the first writing of this chapter, some of us had hoped that, if these 'facts' were remembered, not only in the study of British literature but also in the study of the literatures of the European colonizing cultures of the great age of imperialism, we would produce a narrative, in literary history, of the 'worlding' of what could once be called 'the Third World', and now increasingly, taking the second World into uneven account, is called 'the South.'

Some of us had hoped that we would produce a narrative of what is called 'the South'.

(Spivak, 1999, p.114)

Example3

As the fiber content increased an increase in hydraulic conductivity was observed. Recently, Moghal et al. (2016) reported that hydraulic conductivity of fiber mixed lime treated soil increases with increase in fiber content. According to Plé and Lê (2012), a fiber content of 0.6% was found to be suitable for maintaining the hydraulic conductivity within acceptable limits for barrier applications. However, further studies are required in this direction by varying fiber content, fiber length and fiber type to evolve a rational methodology and wide acceptance in landfill cap barrier applications.

Divya, P.V. et.al. 2018. “Hydraulic conductivity behaviour of soil blended with geofiber inclusions”. Geotextiles and Geomembranes. 46. (2018)

Example 4

A compound sentence is a sentence that connects two independent clauses, and they are best for combining two or more self-sufficient and related sentences into a single, unified one, and they give your writing a faster pace and unite related ideas together, but they have a few more extra rules than standard sentences.

Adapted from https://www.grammarly.com/blog/compound-sentence/

How to write better sentences

✓ Be careful with support units.
- Avoid starting a sentence with a support unit.
- Avoid support units between the subject and predicate.

✓ Use short and medium length sentences
- about 20-25 words, no longer than 2.5 lines (?)
- Don’t use a comma if you can use a full stop.
- Read out loud.
- If you can remove a word from a sentence, remove a word from a sentence.

“You are not Proust. Do not write long sentences. If they come into your head, write them, but then break them down.” (Eco, 2015. p. 147-148))

How to write better sentences

- ✓ Read better sentences.
- ✓ Learn about grammar and analyse your sentences.
- ✓ Uniskills sentence module .
- ✓ Make sure your content is complex, not your sentences.

Questions

GRASP webpage
https://researchtoolkit.library.curtin.edu.au/grasp/

Help
libraryhelp@curtin.edu.au

Feedback (Stop – Start – Continue)
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1t7roPInys2xK_0zY69ivY9s09ZNs2iY_byLVdCSKD7M/edit?usp=sharing

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