Understanding and using different types of sentences

Produced by the staff of the Dalhousie Writing Centre
Types of Sentences

• Four Sentence Types:
  – SIMPLE
  – COMPOUND
  – COMPLEX
  – COMPOUND-COMPLEX
Simple Sentences

• **Definition**: one independent clause

• **Examples**:

  - Robyn takes notes during lectures.
  - After class, John returns to his room.
  - John writes his lecture notes from memory.
Simple Sentences: Issues

• Remember that each simple sentence MUST possess a subject (noun or pronoun) and a predicate (verb or verb phrase).
  – Failure to include a subject + predicate means that you have written a sentence fragment.
  – Except **ions**: imperative and exclamatory sentences which have implied subjects.

  • *Stop the bus at the corner, please.* (imperative)
  • *Help!* (exclamatory)
Simple Sentences: more issues

- Simple Sentences can be long and involve many modifying words and phrases:

  After class, John returns to his room in Howe Hall and writes extensive and well-organized lecture notes from memory.

  Disadvantaged by a poor memory, Robyn chooses to take brief notes during the lecture.
Compound Sentences

• **Definition**: two or more independent clauses

• **Examples**:

  Robyn takes notes during lectures, but John writes his lecture notes from memory after class.

  Robyn’s notes are brief; John’s notes are long and detailed.

  John writes notes after class: he has a good memory.
Compound Sentences: Issues

• Coordinating conjunctions:
  – and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet

• Using transition words with semicolons:

  Robyn’s notes are brief; however, John’s notes are long and detailed.

  Robyn’s notes are brief; John’s notes, however, are long and detailed.
Complex Sentences

• **Definition**: one independent clause + at least one dependent clause

• **Examples**:

  *Although* John writes his notes after class, he *recalls the lecture in detail because* he has a good memory.

  *Robyn, who takes notes during the lecture, does not rely on her memory.*
Complex Sentences: Issues

- The subordinating conjunction attached to the beginning of a clause defines the clause as dependent.

- A dependent clause can NEVER stand alone as a sentence, as any sentence must be, at the very least, a single independent clause. A dependent clause on its own is a sentence fragment.

Example: Although John writes his notes after class, he recalls the lecture in detail. Because he has a good memory.
Compound-Complex Sentences

• **Definition:** at least two independent clauses + at least one dependent clause

• **Example:**

> Robyn takes notes during the lecture because she does not have a good memory, but John, who does have a good memory, writes detailed notes after class.
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