



BUILDING SENTENCES

Sentences are the building blocks of effective writing. It is impossible to write an effective essay, report or practically any other form of writing without effective sentences – so they deserve attention! When you write a single sentence, you need to consider *vocabulary choice, style, grammar* and *sentence structure*. Using a variety of sentence types (simple, complex and compound) makes your writing easier to read.

Grammar point	What you need to know.....
1. Effective sentences...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop✓ are a sequence of words that express a complete thought✓ are clear and concise <p>Avoid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">× being vague× using unnecessary words× using the wrong words (e.g. jargon, language that excludes/offends, slang)× being too general× exaggeration
2. Active voice is often considered the clearest form of sentence construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active voice sentences place focus on the performer of the action – ‘the subject’ (noun). This type of sentence promotes a strong verb and a concise sentence construction.• Active voice formation = Subject + verb + object e.g. He <i>likes</i> ice cream.• To identify the subject, ask who or what performs the action, is in the state, or feels the emotion that the verb describes. Remember that the subject of the verb can be one word or an entire phrase.• The verb is an action, state or emotion. Active voice verbs can be in any tense. But don’t forget that the verb needs to agree in number with its subject!• In active voice, the object comes after the verb. Note that objects can be either direct or indirect. Indirect objects are introduced with <i>to or for</i>.
3. Passive voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Passive voice tends to encourage wordy sentence constructions. It is usually only preferred in some types of scientific writing.• Passive voice formation = Object + verb in passive form (to be + past participle) e.g. The student was fascinated. <i>OR</i>• Object + verb in passive form + by + subject e.g. The student was fascinated by the book.• Use passive sentences only when the object is more important than the subject (the student, in the example above).
4. Simple sentence structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple sentences have a subject, verb and object (we can call this an independent clause or a control unit) e.g. the student studied English.• A simple sentence is a complete thought that makes sense on its own.• Note that there is no punctuation between the subject, verb and object.

<p>5. Compound sentences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A compound sentence is two or more simple sentences (two independent clauses or control units) joined together with coordinating conjunctions (the FANBOYS: <i>for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so</i>). Note the comma used after the conjunction. e.g. She rides to work, and he catches the bus. (This could easily be broken into two sentences: She rides to work. He catches the bus).
<p>6. Complex sentences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a complex sentence, simple sentences (independent clauses or control units) are combined with dependent clauses or a support unit. Dependent clauses or support units contain <i>additional information</i> that is less important than the independent clause or control unit information. They do not make sense without the rest of the sentence. Complex sentences are joined by subordinating conjunctions such as because, although, since and when, or relative pronouns such as who, which or that. If the dependent clause or support unit is added to the front of a sentence, a comma is used at the end of the clause/unit. e.g. Although she works hard, she finds study challenging. 'Although she works hard' followed by a full stop is a sentence fragment error. A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence. It is not a complete thought and does not make sense without the rest of the sentence.
<p>7. Parallel structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences often contain patterns of words, phrases, or clauses that need to have similar grammatical construction. They are usually joined by commas, and the words 'and' and 'or'. e.g. His favourite aspects of English are <i>reading, writing and listening</i>. (Note that all the verbs are in the gerund –ing form) An example of how this might be written incorrectly is: His favourite aspects of English are <i>reading, writing and to listen</i>. (The first two verbs are in the gerund –ing form but the third verb is not).
<p>8. Nominalisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When paraphrasing, students often change the verb from active voice to passive voice. This is not always ideal. Another way to change the focus of a sentence is the technique of nominalisation, which means making a verb into a noun. E.g. The doctor <i>examined</i> the patient thoroughly. With nominalisation = The <i>examination</i> was thorough. Be careful of subtle changes in focus or meaning. Also, do not overuse nominalisation, or your writing will become too 'wordy'.
<p>Useful links: (need to add links)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentence structure: Purdue Online Writing Lab https://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/5/ RMIT University Learning Lab https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/sentence-construction-o Nominalisation: University of Wollongong http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/academic/3b.html 	