



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

<p>5. Compound sentences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A compound sentence is two or more simple sentences (<b>two independent clauses</b> or <b>control units</b>) joined together with <b>coordinating conjunctions</b> (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, <b>and</b> he catches the bus. (This could easily be broken into two sentences: She rides to work. He catches the bus).</li> </ul>
<p>6. Complex sentences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In a complex sentence, simple sentences (<b>independent clauses</b> or <b>control units</b>) are combined with <b>dependent clauses</b> or a <b>support unit</b>.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Complex sentences are joined by <b>subordinating conjunctions</b> such as <b>because, although, since and when</b>, or <b>relative pronouns</b> such as <b>who, which or that</b>.</li> <li>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. <b>Although</b> she works hard, she finds study challenging.</li> <li>'Although she works hard' followed by a full stop is a <b>sentence fragment</b> error.</li> <li>A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence. It is not a complete thought and does not make sense without the rest of the sentence.</li> </ul>
<p>7. Parallel structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentences often contain <b>patterns</b> of words, phrases, or clauses that need to have similar grammatical construction. They are usually joined by commas, and the words 'and' and 'or'.</li> <li>e.g. His favourite aspects of English are <i>reading, writing and listening</i>. (<b>Note that all the verbs are in the gerund –ing form</b>)</li> <li>An example of how this might be written incorrectly is: His favourite aspects of English are <i>reading, writing and to listen</i>. (<b>The first two verbs are in the gerund –ing form but the third verb is not</b>).</li> </ul>
<p>8. Nominalisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Be careful of subtle changes in focus or meaning. Also, do not overuse nominalisation, or your writing will become too 'wordy'.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Useful links: (need to add links)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Sentence structure:</b> Purdue Online Writing Lab <a href="https://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/5/">https://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/5/</a> RMIT University Learning Lab <a href="https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/node/60">https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/node/60</a></li> <li><b>Nominalisation:</b> University of Wollongong <a href="http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/academic/3b.html">http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/academic/3b.html</a></li> </ul>	