

4 Fundamental Sentence Structures

1) **Simple Sentence** = Independent Clause

Independent Clause = Subject + Verb + Predicate (complete the thought)

Example: The students attend school.

Note: Usually, when you attach words to a simple sentence, you will use commas.

2) **Compound Sentence** = Independent clause, coordinating conjunction Independent Clause.

Coordinating Conjunction = and, but, yet, for, or

Example: The students attend school, and they participate in activities.

Example: The students attend school and participate in activities.

Note: In the first example, “they” is a pronoun and serves as the subject of the second independent clause, hence the comma. In the second example, there is only one subject, “The students,” hence no comma.

3) **Complex Sentence** = Dependent Clause, Independent Clause.

Dependent Clause = a group of words that lacks a complete thought (cannot stand alone)... and is dependent on a complete thought to come.

Example: Throughout the year, the students attend school.

Note: The phrase “throughout the year” cannot stand alone. Rather, it is dependent on a complete thought to come: “the students attend school.”

There are different types of dependent clauses, but all of these clauses must be attached to the independent clause with a comma. Below are two common types.

Prepositional Phrase = phrase that begins with a preposition (position word)

Example: In the beginning of the year, the students learn their class schedule.

Example: Before the bell rings, many students go to their lockers.

Participle Phrases = verbs in the “ing” form that do not serve as the action verb in the sentence.

Example: Running to class, the student tripped and dropped his books.

Example: Listening to the teacher, the class wrote down the notes.

4) **Compound – Complex Sentence** = Dependent Clause, Independent Clause,
Coordinating Conjunction Independent Clause.

Example: Throughout the year, students attend school, and they participate in activities.

Example: Throughout the year, students attend school and participate in activities.

Note: In the first example, there is a comma before “and” because “they” serves as a subject in the second independent clause. In the second example, there is no comma before “and” because there is no second subject. Both sentences are punctuated correctly.