

## Sentences: Use a variety of SENTENCE TYPES in your writing

There are four “types” of sentences in English: **simple**, **complex**, **simple compound**, and **compound-complex**. The different types are determined by what combination of **clauses** they contain. (*See table below.*)

More complicated information often needs more complicated sentences, but longer, more complicated sentences are not necessarily better sentences. A variety of sentence types is needed to make college-level writing clear and effective.

### First, a word about *clauses*:

A clause is a group of words that includes a subject-verb pair and additional words or phrases that “complete” the idea. An **independent clause (IC)** can stand by itself as a sentence:

- The colonies declared their independence from Great Britain.
- Both agents are applied in tandem.
- The setting is heavily detailed.

If a clause has a word at the beginning that makes it unable to stand alone, it’s called a **dependent (or subordinate) clause (DC)**. It is dependent on (or *subordinate to*) another, independent, clause. The beginning words are called subordinate (or subordinating) conjunctions, or—more usefully—**dependent words** (or dependent marker words).

- **After** The colonies declared their independence from Great Britain....
- **If** both agents are applied in tandem...
- **Because** the setting is heavily detailed...

We very often—almost always—**combine clauses in sentences** to best express ideas and the relationships among them. A sentence can be made up of any combination of clauses, **as long as there is one independent clause and that any dependent clauses are clearly meant to relate to it.**

### Sentence types:

The tables below illustrate the **types of sentences** and the **clauses** that define them.

Type of sentence	Clauses
simple	one independent clause ( <b>IC</b> )
complex	one <b>IC</b> + one or more dependent clauses ( <b>DCs</b> )
(simple) compound	two or more <b>ICs</b> (properly separated)*
compound-complex	two or more <b>ICs</b> + one or more <b>DCs</b>

*\*For help with how to properly separate ICs, see the Writing Guide “Commas: Finding & fixing commas splices.”*

Type of sentence	Example	Clause
Simple: 1 <b>IC</b>	The colonies declared their independence.	<b>IC</b>
	The Continental Congress met.	<b>IC</b>
Complex: 1 <b>IC</b> & 1+ <b>DCs</b>	The colonies declared their <b>independence</b> , <b>which</b> ended their political relationship with Great Britain .	<b>IC + DC</b>
	After the colonies declared their independence, the Continental Congress met.	<b>DC + IC</b>
	<b>After</b> the colonies declared their independence, <b>which</b> ended their political relationship with Great Britain, the Continental Congress met.	<b>DC + DC + IC</b>
	<b>After</b> the colonies declared their independence, <b>which</b> ended their political relationship with Great Britain, the Continental Congress met to determine what form of national government would be established.	<b>DC + DC + IC + DC</b>
(simple) compound: 2+ <b>ICs</b> (properly separated)	The colonies declared their independence; this ended their political relationship with Great Britain.	<b>IC   IC</b>
	The Continental Congress met, and they then formulated the Articles of Confederation.	<b>IC   IC</b>
compound-complex: 2+ <b>ICs</b> & 1+ <b>DCs</b>	<b>After</b> the colonies declared their independence, <b>which</b> ended their political relationship with Great Britain, the Continental Congress met to determine what form of national government would be established and they then formulated the Articles of Confederation.	<b>DC + DC + IC + DC   IC</b>
	<b>After</b> the colonies declared their independence, <b>which</b> ended their political relationship with Great Britain, the Continental Congress met to determine what form of national government would be established and they then formulated the Articles of Confederation, which were later replaced by the Constitution.	<b>DC + DC + IC + DC   IC + DC</b>