

Grammar revision

Complex Sentences & Common Errors

A. Complex sentences

A complex sentence is a sentence with one **independent clause** and at least one **dependent clause**. It works best when you need to provide more information to explain or modify your sentence's main point.

A dependent clause is a clause that cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. Without an independent clause, a dependent clause is just a sentence fragment.

e.g. **[Incorrect]** When I grow up.

[Correct] When I grow up, I'll use complete sentences.

Let's now look at other ways we can make complex sentences.

1. Relative Clauses

We can use relative clauses to give essential or extra information about a person, place, or thing. We do this by using relative pronouns (who, whom, which, that, whose) and relative adverbs (where, when, why).

2. Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions showing cause and effect: *because, as, since, though, due to, provided that, because of, unless, so that*.

Subordinating conjunctions signaling relationships of time or place: *once, while, when, whenever, where, wherever, before, after*.

3. Conditional Clauses

Also known as 'If clauses', they are used to express that the action in the main clause can only take place if a certain condition is met.

Exercise 1: Decide if the following clauses are dependent or independent clauses.

Write I next to independent clauses and put a period (.) at the end.

Write D next to dependent clauses and underline the subordinators.

1. _____ Many people have lettuce in a salad
2. _____ Lettuce is one of the easiest vegetables to grow
3. _____ If the soil is not already a little wet
4. _____ When they are about two to three centimeters tall
5. _____ You can transplant the seedlings into the garden
6. _____ You can give the soil some water

7. _____ That are bigger than the lettuce roots
8. _____ You should harvest lettuce leaves

B. Common errors

When we begin to practice writing academically, we often are unaware of the grammar errors while writing sentences, or are unable to recognise what and where the error is. Therefore, this section will introduce three of the most common errors in sentence structure: Sentence Fragments, Run-on sentences, and Comma Splices.

1. Sentence Fragments

Study the examples and decide what each sentence is missing, then correct it.

- a. Because some students work part-time

Problem: **Thiếu mệnh đề chính**.....

Correction:

- b. For example, the increase in the cost of travelling

Problem: **Thiếu động từ**.....

Correction:

- c. Gregg's bike tour having a huge impact

Problem: **Thiếu động từ, mệnh đề chính**.....

Correction: **Gregg's bike tour having a huge impact was a great success.**.....

- d. Many people who get married before they are matured enough

Problem:

Correction:

Conclusion: Sentence fragments are incomplete sentences or parts of sentences.

Always check your own writing for sentence fragments. Make sure that every clause contains at least one subject and one verb, and every dependent clause is attached to an independent clause.

2. Run-on sentences and Comma Splices

Study the examples and decide what problem each sentence has, then correct it.

- a. Getting married is easy staying married is a different manner.

Problem:

Correction:

2. San Francisco is a cosmopolitan city, there are people from many cultures and ethnic groups living there.

Problem:

Correction:

Conclusion: A run-on sentence is a sentence where two or more independent clauses are combined with no punctuation. A comma splice is a sentence where two or more independent clauses are joined incorrectly using a comma.

Exercise 1: Correct the following run-on or comma splice sentences using the suggested method.

1. A newly arrived international student faces many problems, for example, he has to cope with a new culture.

a. (add a period)

.....
b. (add a semicolon)

.....
2. New York city is bustling with life, people always have a hectic life schedule.

a. (add a subordinator)

.....
b. (add a period)

.....
c. (add a semicolon)

.....
d. (add a coordinator)

.....
3. Learning a new language is like learning to swim it takes a lot of practice.

a. (add a coordinator)

.....
4. Ask for assistance at the reference desk in the library, there is always a librarian on duty.

a. (add a semicolon)

5. Skiing is a dangerous sport you can easily break your leg or your neck.
a. (add a subordinator)

Exercise 2: Read the following sentences and choose the correct sentence problem, then correct them.

1. Whether you're travelling to the islands or the mountains of Thailand you're likely to spend at least one night in its capital city on the way Bangkok might be noisy and polluted but it's also an exciting city with plenty of things to see and do.

A. Sentence fragments B. Run-on sentences C. Comma splices

2. The Khao San Road, which is a famous traveller spot even before Leonardo di Caprio's character in the film The Beach stayed there, but it's noisy, not very pretty and not very Thai.

A. Sentence fragments B. Run-on sentences C. Comma splices

3. Bangkok's traffic can be a nightmare, you can easily take a taxi, if you want to spend hours stuck in traffic jams, but there are two much better ways to get around the city.

A. Sentence fragments B. Run-on sentences C. Comma splices

4. Thai street food is among the best in the world, for around \$5 you can eat a filling and delicious meal.

A. Sentence fragments B. Run-on sentences C. Comma splices

5. After you've seen the main sites like the Giant Buddha at the temple of Wat Pho and the spectacular Grand Palace, and shopped at Chatuchak market.

A. Sentence fragments B. Run-on sentences C. Comma splices