

Sentence Structure Cheat Sheet

Master Syntax, Clauses, and Punctuation for Advanced Writing

1. Core Components

Every complete sentence requires at least a **subject** and a **predicate**.

- **Subject:** Who or what the sentence is about (noun phrase).
- **Predicate:** What the subject is or does (contains the main verb).
- **Clause:** A group of words containing a subject and a verb.

Example: *The swift fox (subject) leaped over the lazy dog (predicate).*

2. Types of Clauses

- **Independent Clause:** Expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence.
- **Dependent (Subordinate) Clause:** Starts with a subordinator (e.g., *because, although, if*) and cannot stand alone.

Formula:

Complex = Independent + Dependent

3. Four Sentence Structures

3.1 Simple Sentence

Contains independent clause.

- *The train arrived on time.*

3.2 Compound Sentence

Contains **two or more independent clauses** joined by a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) or a semicolon.

- *The train arrived on time, **but** Sarah missed it.*

3.3 Complex Sentence

Contains **one independent clause** and **at least one dependent clause**.

- ***Because** it was raining, the match was postponed.*

3.4 Compound-Complex

Contains **two or more independent clauses** and **at least one dependent clause**.

- *I wanted to go to the beach, **but** it started raining **before** we left.*

4. Common Pitfalls

- **Run-on Sentences:** Two independent clauses fused without proper punctuation.
- **Comma Splices:** Two independent clauses joined *only* by a comma. (Fix with a semicolon or conjunction).
- **Sentence Fragments:** Incomplete sentences missing a subject or verb, or functioning as an orphaned dependent clause.