

UGRC 110

Academic Writing

Session 4 –Sentence Structure and Punctuations

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Session Overview

In this section, we will discuss the **sentence and the correct usage of punctuations**. Now that you have learned about the words we use in forming sentences, let us look at the different kinds of sentences that we have in the English Language. You can learn to identify sentences in three different ways: (1) by knowing the definition of a sentence or what makes a sentence, (2) by looking at the kinds of sentences we have, and (3) by studying the structure of a sentence. In this section, you will study and practise each of these ways.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to

- identify a sentence that expresses a complete thought
- write a sentence that expresses a complete thought
- identify the kinds of sentences that there are in English
- identify a sentence according to its structure
- Use punctuation correctly

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- What is a sentence?
- Kinds of sentences
- Parts of sentences

Subjects

Predicates

Objects

Complements

- Phrases
- Types of sentences

Simple sentences

Compound sentences

Complex sentences

Compound complex sentences

- Punctuations

Reading List

- a) Quirk and Greenbaum, *A University Grammar Of English*
- b) *Yule Oxford Practice Grammar* Chapter 6 pp. 57-65



Topic One

WHAT IS A SENTENCE?



What is a Sentence?

A **sentence** is a group of words that express a complete thought about something or someone. A sentence that does not express a complete thought is called a *fragment*. Let us look at the following examples.

1. Played football until dark. (Incomplete thought)
2. The children played football until dark. (sentence)
3. Either my friend or his mother. (Incomplete thought)
4. Either my friend or his mother will be at the airport. (sentence)
5. For more than three days. (Incomplete thought)
6. Akua has remained indoors for more than three days. (sentence)

Note that in the sentences above, sentences (1, 3, and 5) are considered as incomplete thoughts because,

- i. in sentence 1, we do not know who '**played football until dark**'
- ii. in sentence 3, we are not told what '**the friend or the mother**' did, does, or will do.
- iii. In sentence 5, we do not know what happened or will happen '**for more than three days.**'



Topic Two

KINDS OF SENTENCES



Kinds of Sentences

There are four kinds of sentences. Each conveys a different kind of thought and is written in a different way. They are; *declaratives*, *imperatives*, *interrogatives*, and *exclamations*.

- A **declarative** sentence makes a statement and ends with a period (full stop). For example:

The sun rises from the East and sets at the West.

Kwame Nkrumah was the first president of Ghana.

- An **imperative** sentence gives a command or makes a request. For example:

Tell me the name of the UN Secretary General.

Write his name on the board.

In imperative sentences, the subject of the sentence is not directly stated but it is understood to be the pronoun 'you'.



Kinds of Sentences

- An **interrogative** sentence asks a question or requests for information.

What is the name of the immediate past president of Ghana?

Will you be going to the university this year?

- An **exclamation** sentence expresses a strong or sudden emotion. They normally end with the exclamation sign.

Just look at the beautiful scenery!

What a big mistake did we make!

Activity

Some of the following groups of words are sentences, and some are not. In the space provided beside each sentence, write S against a complete sentence or F against what you consider an incomplete sentence.

1. On the sidelines by the players' bench.
2. Christine will be elected president .
3. The man who looked through the binoculars .
4. The drama club will meet on Tuesday night .
5. Neither the girls nor the boys in Mr. Kumi's class .

Topic Three

PARTS OF A SENTENCE



Parts of a Sentence (*Subject*)

Every sentence must have two basic parts. These parts are known as the **Subject** and a **Predicate**. Now let me explain each part into details.

- **Subjects**

The ***subject*** of a sentence names a person, place, thing, or idea and tells who or what the sentence is about. It identifies the performer or receiver of the action expressed in the rest of the sentence, that is the predicate. For example:

My brothers / never arrive late for dinner
subject predicate

Christine / will be elected president.
subject predicate

In the examples above '***my brothers***' and '***Christine***' are the subject sentence since the rest of the sentence talks about them.



Subject

There are different types of subjects; a simple subject made up of only a noun or pronoun, and a noun phrase made up of a noun and its modifiers (Modifiers are words that describe, identify, qualify or limit the meaning of a noun or pronoun), or a compound subject made up of two or more simple subjects or noun phrases joined by a coordinating conjunction (recall Unit 1, section 3). Below are examples:

1. **Mozart** began composing at the age of four.
 2. **A number of very bad decisions** destroyed the company.
 3. **Paul and Peter** are common twin names.
 4. **The doctor or the new medical assistant** will attend to you.
- Note that, in the sentences above, I have underlined the subjects. '**Mozart**' in sentence (1) is an example of a simple subject, and '**a number of very bad decisions**' in sentence (2) is a noun phrase. Sentences (3 and 4) have compound subjects. '**Paul** and **Peter**' are simple subjects joined by the coordinating conjunction 'and' and '**the doctor or the new medical assistant**' are noun phrases joined by the coordinating conjunction '**or**'.

Parts of a Sentence(*Predicate*)

- The ***predicate*** of a sentence indicates what the subject does, what happens to the subject, or what is said about the subject. It is the part that says something about the subject. In other words, predicates indicate an action or a state of being. In the following examples, the predicates are underlined.

The old cinema hall **was pulled down last year.**

Ama **received a full scholarship from the university.**

- Just as with the subject, there are also different kinds of predicates. There are the simple predicate, complete predicate, and the complex predicate. The ***simple*** predicate is the main verb or the main verb and its helping verbs. For example:

He **wept.**

A new fufu pounding machine **has been developed.**

- Note that in the above sentences the simple predicates are underlined.

Predicate

- The **complete** predicate consists of the simple predicate plus its modifiers. The modifiers may be **objects** or **complements**. (I would explain objects and complements a little later). Here are examples of complete predicates:

The pouring rain **flooded the whole community**. (object)

The ride to the city **is longer during rush hours**. (complement)

- The **compound** predicate contains two or more predicates that have the same subject and that are joined by: **and, but, or, nor, or** another conjunction. Here are examples with the compound predicates underlined.

The chairman **neither** [wanted to run for a second term] **nor** [planned to serve] .

Adjoa [went to the market], [bought chicken], [prepared a nice meal] **and** [served the guest].

- Note that all the actions described in the sentence by the various verbs are about the same noun. The first sentence consists of a simple subject 'the chairman' and a compound predicate made up of two complete predicates joined by the conjunction '**nor**'. The second sentence has 'Adjoa' as the subject and compound predicate which is made up of four simple predicates.

Parts of a Sentence(*Object*)

- A **direct object** is a noun or pronoun that receives the action of a verb. A direct object answers the question “what?” or “whom?” Look at the following examples in which the objects are underlined.

The base drummer played **a lively tune**.

The crowd in the stadium cheered **the players** on.

- The noun phrase ‘**a lively tune**’ answers the question, ‘what did he play?’ and the noun phrase ‘**the players**’ answers the question, ‘whom did they cheer on’.

Object

- An ***indirect object*** is a noun or pronoun that names the person or thing that benefits from the action of the verb, or to whom something is done. The nouns underlined in the sentences below are indirect objects.
 - Note that the words written in italics are the ones that are the direct objects.
1. The organization gave **him** *an award* for his hard work.
 2. Peter bought a *gift* for **Jane**.

Parts of a Sentence(*Complements*)

- A **complement** is a word or group of words which describe a subject or object and completes the meaning of the sentence. The complement can be a noun, a noun phrase, or an adjective that renames or describes the subject. There are two kinds of complements: *subject complements and object complements*.
- A **linking verb** (recall the lesson on different kinds of verbs in the last section) connects the subject of a sentence to *a subject complement*.
- An **object complement** is a noun, a noun phrase, or an adjective that modifies or renames the direct object. Object complements appear with transitive verbs such as *name, find, make, elect, appoint* and *consider* which express action directed towards something or someone.

Complements

- Below are examples:

Chinua Achebe is **a famous writer**.

She felt **tired**.

The village elected him **a king**.

The contaminated food made several students **sick**

The underlined words in the first two sentences are subject complements and the ones in the third and fourth sentences are object complements. The noun phrase ‘a famous writer’ is linked to the subject ‘Chinua Achebe’ by the linking verb ‘is’. The adjective ‘tired’ describes the subject ‘she’. ‘A king’ refers to the object ‘him’ and the adjective ‘sick’ refers to the ‘students’.

Topic Four

PHRASES



Phrases

- A **phrase** is a group of related words that lacks either a subject, a predicate or both. They can appear at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence and can help you to make your writings more detailed and interesting. However, a phrase cannot stand alone as a sentence. Let us look at the following two sentences.

The armed robbers escaped.

Scared by the alarm, the armed robbers escaped **without getting any money**.

- There are different types of phrases and they can represent any part of a sentence.
- The most common phrase is the prepositional phrase. The prepositional phrase consists of a preposition (*in, above, at, with etc*), the object of the preposition (*a noun or pronoun*), and any modifiers of the object. They usually function as adverbs or adjectives to say something more about people, places, objects or actions and add information about time, place, direction and manner.



Topic five

TYPES OF SENTENCES



Simple Sentences

- A *simple sentence* consists of an *independent clause* and no subordinate or a *dependent clause*. It is a sentence that has only one subject and one verb. However, a simple sentence can also be quite elaborate. Let us look at the following examples.

The stranger left yesterday.

The director of the company walked into their office.

- In the above sentences, the subjects of the verb are underlined and the verbs are written in boldface. A simple sentence may also have a compound subject and a compound verb as exemplified in the following sentences.

The houses and the cars were damaged.

The store opens early and closes late.

Compound Sentences

- A **compound sentence** is a sentence that consists of two or more simple sentences joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction such as: *and, but, or, for, yet, or nor*. The clauses in a compound sentence must be closely related in thought. Below are examples:
 - **Tom arrived** at midnight, *and* **we** met him at the airport.
 - **We woke up** early and **slept** late, *but* **all** of us **enjoyed** our camping.
- In the first sentence, ‘*Tom*’ is the subject of one of the independent clauses (simple sentences) and ‘*we*’ is the subject of the second clause. The two clauses are joined by the conjunction ‘*and*’. In the second sentence the conjunction ‘*but*’ is used to join the two independent clauses. You can avoid short and jerky sentences in your writings by using compound sentences.

Complex Sentences

- A **complex sentence** has one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. The dependent clauses usually begin with a relative pronoun such as *when, who, where* or a subordinating conjunction such as *until, so that, because, while*. Such a clause might tell when something happens, which person was involved, or where the event took place. For example:

When we visited Major Oppong, // he shared his memories of working in the army during World War II.

Major Oppong was a photographer // *until he joined the army*.

Lieutenant Agbe, // *who is a retired military pilot*, // told us about his experience in enemy territory, // *where he was a prisoner of war*.

- In the above sentences, the dependent clauses are underlined and the independent clauses are written in italics. The first and second complex sentences above have one independent clause and a dependent clause each. The dependent clause in sentence (1) is introduced by a relative pronoun and the one in sentence (2) is introduced by a subordinating conjunction. Sentence (3) as you can see, has two dependent clauses and an independent clause.

Compound Complex Sentences

- A **compound-complex sentence** as the name suggests, contains two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. Here are examples:
 1. When our school celebrated its Founder's Day, we signed up for environmental projects, which were targeted at cleaning the environment, and we try to complete them all in one day.
 2. Students have cleaned up the beaches, and they have planted flowers in the parks so that the shores look inviting to visitors.
- Note that in the sentences above, the dependent clauses are written in blue ink. In the first sentence, there are two independent clauses and two dependent clauses. The second one, however, has two independent clauses and a dependent clause. You can use compound-complex sentences in your writing to show complicated relationships between events and ideas.



ACTIVITY

Identify each of the following sentences as *simple*, *compound*, *complex*, or *compound-complex*, and write it at the space provided at the end of each sentence.

1. Trumpeter Louis Armstrong was a major influence on jazz music.
2. Armstrong, who was born in New Orleans in the USA played the cornet at first.
3. While he was a member of Fletcher Henderson's band, he began to create innovative jazz forms, and later, in Chicago he switched to the trumpet.
4. He made important recordings in Chicago from 1925 to 1928.
5. Many jazz historians contend that he was the most influential jazz musician of the twentieth century.
6. Armstrong was also a singer and a film actor, but his contributions as a musician are his most enduring legacy.

Topic six

PUNCTUATIONS



Full Stop, (.) Question Mark (?) and Exclamation Mark (!)

Punctuation marks that come at the end of a sentence are called *end marks*. A sentence ends with one of these three end marks as exemplified in the sentences below.

- **Full stop(period):** It's very warm today. The office was closed. Please be careful.
- **Question mark:** Who is that? Did you see the show? Could you wait, please?
- **Exclamation mark:** Oh, No! I don't believe it!
- The full stop (also called period in the American English) marks the end of sentence that makes a simple statement which is called a declarative.
- The question mark is used after a sentence that requests for information
- the exclamation mark at the end of a sentence shows excitement or a strong emotion.

Full Stop, (.) Question Mark (?) and Exclamation Mark (!)

- We also use the full stop after abbreviations. An *abbreviation* is a word group of words that has been shortened by omitting some letters. For example:

Actual form

Fanofa Street

Nyaniba Avenue

Doctor Pobee

Sergeant Agbleze

Abbreviation

Fanofa St.

Nyaniba Ave.

Dr. Pobee

Sgt. Agbleze

- We also use the full stop after the titles Mister (Mr.), Doctor (Dr.), and Professor (Prof.) you should also use the full stop, not a question mark after an indirect question. For example:
 - Direct question:** Where are the students?
 - Indirect question:** The teacher asked where the students were.

Comma

Commas are used to make the meaning of sentences clear by separating certain elements of the sentence. This helps readers to understand the meaning of your sentences.

- Use a comma to separate words or group of words within a sentence, for example groups that are series of three or more items or two or more adjectives that come before a noun. This is exemplified in the following examples:
 1. We put lettuce, cucumber, carrots, spring onions, and tomatoes in the salad.
 2. Esi is an intelligent, attractive, and funny young lady.
- We often use a comma before two independent clauses that are joined with coordinating conjunctions such as **and**, **but**, **for**, **yet**, **nor**, **so**, and **or**. For example:
 1. Everyone must work at conserving energy, or we may have serious energy crises.
 2. My father drives to work with two of our neighbours, for it conserves fuel and also saves the environment.

Comma

- Use a comma to separate introductory words, phrases, and clauses from the rest of a sentence. Look at the following sentences.

Above the sky was a mass of clouds.

- The sentence above is very confusing without a comma. The comma can come before the 'above' or 'sky'. However, it gives a clearer picture when the comma comes after 'above' as shown below.

Above, the sky was a mass of clouds. (Introductory word)

- You should also use a comma to set off a word or phrase that interrupts the flow of thought in a sentence. For example:

His inability to be at the station on time, however, was what saved his life.

- Another use of comma is to separate a non-restrictive word group from the rest of the sentence. A non-restrictive word group describes or modifies a word or phrase in a sentence (recall our lesson on the adjectives), but it does not change the meaning of the word or phrase. Here are examples of such word groups in a sentence.

Most people either love or hate apapransa, which is a traditional Ghanaian dish.

- To decide whether a comma is needed in such sentences, read the sentence without the word group. If the basic meaning is unchanged, a comma is needed.

Comma

- Use a comma to set off parenthetical expressions from the rest of the sentence. A parenthetical expression provides extra information. It can also be a transitional word or phrase such as (***however, for example, at the beginning***) For example:
- Furthermore, his essay had not been proofread.
- Use commas with **dates, addresses, titles, and numbers**. In dates, use a comma between the day and the year, but when you use a month and a year, a comma is not needed.
- She graduated on June 20, 1997.
- Use a comma after the year if the sentence continues after the date.
- The couple met on February 14, 1980, at a restaurant in London.
- Use a comma between the city or town and the country or state. And if the sentence continues after the country, use a comma after the country.
- The team finally arrived in Accra, Ghana.

Comma

- Use a comma after the year if the sentence continues after the date.
The couple met on February 14, 1980, at a restaurant in London.
- Use a comma between the city or town and the country or state. And if the sentence continues after the country, use a comma after the country.
The team finally arrived in Accra, Ghana.
- Use commas to set off the name of **someone directly addressed**, to set off a **tag question**, and with a **'not' phrase**.
 - a) **Direct address:** “James, answer the question concisely.”
 - b) **Tag question:** More development will require a more expensive infrastructure, won't it?
 - c) **“Not” phrase:** Independence day, not Republic day, is celebrated nationally in Ghana.

Activity

- Re write the following passage in the space provided below the passage and add any missing punctuation.

Do you know about Katy Payne Payne studies elephants in countries like Kenya Africa she has found out that elephant's voices are below the human level of hearing Payne proved this with a special tape recorder elephants can call to one another over hundreds of miles what a terrific hidden code you could call me in Accra from Kumasi today Katy Payne lives in Durban South Africa where she writes and her elephant data she will speak on this issue at Legon on September 19 2010 and I can't wait to hear her.

Quotation Marks

- Quotation marks are used to indicate **direct speech**. They are always used in pairs. A direct quotation is a report of a speaker's exact words.

It was Abraham Lincoln who spoke about a government “of the people, by the people, for the people.”

- We normally use a comma to separate the direct speech from the rest of the sentence. The comma comes before the quotation mark. Quotation marks are also called inverted commas.

Shakespeare wrote, “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

- Commas and full stops always go inside closing quotation marks.

Quotation Marks

- If a quotation is a question or an exclamation, place the question or the exclamation mark before the closing quotation, but if the quoted words are part of a question or exclamation that is not part of the quotation, place the punctuations outside the quotation. For example:
 - a) “What do flowers mean?” I asked.(The quotation is the question)
 - b) Do flowers tell “love messages”?(love messages is the quotation)
- In the first sentence above, the entire question is the direct speech therefore the question mark is enclosed within the quotation mark. In the second sentence, “love messages” is the only words that are quoted and not the entire sentence.

Semicolon

- A semicolon indicates a break in a sentence. It is stronger than a comma but not as strong as a full stop.
- We can use a semi-colon between two separate statements which are linked in meaning.
- We can use them instead of coordinating conjunctions.

The slaves sang songs with secret messages; the songs told listeners how to escape.

- Again, use a semicolon between compound sentences when the clauses are long and complicated, or contain transitional expressions, or commas.

Runaway slaves navigated by the stars; they lived off the land, slept outdoors, and walked hundreds of miles to freedom.

- You should also use a semicolon to separate items in a series if commas are used within the items. It helps prevent confusion in understanding the sentence. For example:

He is stubborn, selfish, and conservative; she is stubborn, combative, and liberal; and no one is surprised that they do not get along.

Colon

- You can use a colon to introduce a list, an explanation, an example, or further thought within a sentence.
- The information that follows the colon should clarify or offer specifics about the information that comes before the colon.
- When you use a colon to introduce a list or a series, make sure the list is preceded by a complete sentence.

The archaeologist uncovered several items: pieces of poetry, seeds, animal bones, and household tools.

- You can also use a colon to introduce an explanation, an example, or a summary as shown in the following sentences.
 - a) In many ways, Ghanaian movies are very predictable: *It is either about love or witchcraft.* (**explanation**)
 - b) The Nzulezu village is particularly famous for its spectacular location: *built on a river.* (an **example**)
 - c) Disaster relief efforts began all over the country: *volunteers raised 40, 000 Ghana cedis.* (**a summary**)

Activity

Rewrite the following paragraph and correct the errors in the use of semicolons and colons.

- a) The ancient Celts: used a form of written communication called the ogham alphabet. This alphabet can still be seen in inscriptions on stones in fact, more than 350 such stones have survived. They are found in: Ireland, Wales, Scotland, southern England, and the Isle of Man . During the time of the ogham's use {about 600 B.C. to 700 A.D}, few people could read and write. To write a message in ogham, a person will draw or chisel a long, straight line. Each letter would be represented by one to five short lines, which might extend to the left or, to the right of, or completely through the line. A message could also be written on a stick, the letters were cut into it's edge.
- b) The ogham's alphabet had 20 letters, each named for a tree; a shrub or other plant, or a natural element, like lightning or the sea. Among the trees represented were the following the birch, the oak, and the hawthorn. Nose ogham and shin ogham were variations in which people used their fingers to form the cross-strokes of the letters against the straight line of their nose or shinbone.

Dash

- A dash is another punctuation that is used to separate parts of sentences and help make our writings clearer. It suggests a stronger separation than a comma, a semicolon, or a colon. It is sometimes used instead of a colon or semi-colon.

I 'm having a great time - there's lots of food here.

- You can also use a dash to show an abrupt break in thought or mood. For example:

Computers have given the world instant communication – and electronic junk mail.

Dashes are emphatic. You should not overuse them in your writings, or they will lose their effectiveness.

Hyphen

- Use a hyphen if a part of a word must be carried over from one line to the next. Bear the following in mind when breaking words into two. (1) The word must have at least two syllables to be broken. (2) Separate the word between syllables. (3) You must leave at least two letters on each line.
- Num-ber (RIGHT) Co-de (WRONG)
- Let-ter (RIGHT) Lette-r (WRONG)
- Twen-ty (RIGHT) Twent-y (WRONG)
- We sometimes use hyphens in these structures.
 - a) **Compound noun:** ice-cream, great-grandmother, son-in-law, ex-president
 - b) **Compound expression before a noun:** an oven-ready meal, a navy-blue suit
 - c) In **compound numbers:** from twenty-one through ninety-nine
 - d) In **spelled out fractions:** two-thirds, three-fourths
- After some **prefixes:** anti-aircraft guns, pre-Xmas shopping, non-aligned movement