

# ACT English

*Lecture 1*

## **Sentence Structure: Sentence Boundaries**

**ACT**

*TestVerbal*

# 1. Subject and Verb

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Every sentence must contain a subject and a verb

*Wrong:*      **Drives a car.** (This sentence has no subject).

*Correct:*      My friend drives a car

*Wrong:*      **Everyone who wishes to study in a US university.** (Again, this sentence has no verb).

*Correct:*      Everyone who wishes to study in a US university has to take the TOEFL test.

## 2. Avoid Fragments

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Fragments are not full sentences because they miss either a subject or a verb

NBC will broadcast the debate. **With discussions afterwards.**

NBC will broadcast the debate, with discussions afterwards.

Jane didn't return to work for three weeks after her illness. **To let her knee fully heal.**

Jane didn't return to work for three weeks. She wanted to let her knee fully heal.

# 3. Simple Sentences

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A simple sentence consist of one subject/verb pair.

My brother has been learning French for five years.

Many students want to get a good job after graduation.

A simple sentence may have a compound subject or a compound verb:

The boy and his father played basketball.

They boy ate dinner, did his homework, and watched TV.

The boy and his father played basketball and watched TV.

# 4. Compound Sentences

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A compound sentence has more than one subject/verb pair.

Each subject/verb pair is **independent** (it may stand alone as a simple sentence)

Sometimes I ignore my alarm clock, and I have to rush to get to classes. – compound sentence

Sometimes I ignore my alarm clock. – independent simple sentence

I have to rush to get to classes. – independent simple sentence

James is obsessed with baseball; he eats, breathes, and lives the game. – compound sentence

James is obsessed with baseball. – independent simple sentence

He eats, breathes, and lives the game. – independent simple sentence

# 5. Comma in Compound Sentences

You should use a comma and a compound conjunctions to separate two clauses in an compound sentence

*I started on time, but I arrived late.*

You can remember these compound conjunctions by acronym FANBOYS

*for and nor but or yet so*

## 6. Introductory Words and Phrases

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You may use an introductory word or phrase (*however, therefore, moreover, as a result, for example*) to connect two **independent** sentences. Introductory words and phrases should be separated by commas

Sometimes I ignore my alarm clock. Therefore, I have to rush to get to classes. – introductory word *therefore* is used in the beginning of a second simple sentence.

Sometimes I ignore my alarm clock; therefore, I have to rush to get to classes. – introductory word *therefore* is used in the middle of a compound sentence.

Sometimes I ignore my alarm clock, so I have to rush to get to classes. – compound conjunction *so* is used in the middle of a compound sentence.

# 7. Comma with Introductory Words or Phrases

You should use a comma to separate an introductory word or phrase in a sentence

***Suddenly,*** *an angry black cat sprang from the shadows.*

Remember the following introductory words and phrases and do not confuse them with conjunctions.

***first(ly), second(ly), third(ly), last(ly),  
also, moreover, furthermore, in addition,  
however, nevertheless, on the one hand, on the other hand  
therefore, in conclusion, hence, consequently, so,  
for example, for instance  
logically, interestingly, paradoxically, interestingly, increasingly***

# 8. Complex Sentences

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A complex sentence has an independent clause (main clause) and a dependent clause.

**A dependent clause** cannot stand alone without the independent (main) clause.

Many students think that grammar is tricky. – complex sentence

Many students think. – main clause (simple sentence)

**That grammar is tricky.** – dependent clause (fragment)

Those who are afraid of heights should not climb the Eiffel Tower. – complex sentence

Those should not climb the Eiffel Tower. – main clause (simple sentence)

**Who are afraid of heights.** – dependent clause (fragment)

# 9. Dependent Clauses

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A dependent clause starts with a subordinate (dependent) conjunction:  
**that, which, who, whom, when, where, why, how, unless, until, if, after  
because, for, since, while, although, though**

**When he wrote the letter.** – dependent clause (fragment)

**Which will finish tomorrow.** – dependent clause (fragment)

**Because I will study hard.** – dependent clause (fragment)

**Since she didn't read this book.** – dependent clause (fragment)

**Where they live.** – dependent clause (fragment)

**Why you always find excuses.** – dependent clause (fragment)

**When you make mistakes.** – dependent clause (fragment)

I do not understand why you always find excuses when you  
make mistakes – full complex sentence

# 10. Subordinate Conjunctions

You should identify subordinate conjunctions in a complex sentence.  
Remember the following subordinate conjunctions

*that, which, who, whom, whose*  
*what, where, when, how, until, as long as, if, unless*  
*because, since*  
*although, though, while, as*

Do not confuse them with compound conjunctions (FANBOYS)

# 11. Comma in Complex Sentences

If the subordinate clause comes first, you need to use a comma

***Because I was thirsty, I drank a glass of water.***

If the main clause comes first, you don't need to use a comma

***I drank a glass of water because I was thirsty.***

You need to use a comma in all cases with ***although*** and ***though***

# 12. Compound-Complex Sentences

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A compound-complex sentence consists of two or more independent clauses and one dependent clause.

I complimented Joe when he finished the job, and he seemed pleased. – compound-complex sentence

I complimented Joe. – independent clause (simple sentence)

And he seemed pleased. – independent clause (simple sentence)

**When he finished the job.** – dependent clause (fragment)

# 13. Don't Confuse!

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Compound  
Conjunctions

**and**

**but, yet**

**so**

**for**

Subordinate  
Conjunctions

**as**

**although, though  
while**

**because, since, as**

Introductory  
Words/Phrases

**also, moreover, furthermore**

**however, nevertheless**

**so, therefore, hence**

**for this reason**