## 1 THE SENTENCE

## 1.1What is a sentence

All academic writing is based on sentences. In other forms of communication, it is often acceptable to speak or write in any form that gets the meaning across; however, in academic writing your sentences have to be correct. There are many definitions of a sentence, but the following one expresses the meaning quite clearly:

**A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought.**

### It has to have a subject (noun or pronoun). This is usually the person, thing or concept that does the action in the sentence and is called the actor. It tells who or what the sentence is about.

**e.g. Jack** ran.  
 **Jill** ran.  
 **Jack and Jill** ran.  
 **The well** has good water.  
 **Running** is good for you.

### It has to have a predicate (verb or verb phrase). This is usually the action that the actor does. It describes what the subject is or is doing.

e.g. Jack **ran.**  
 Jill **ran.**  
 Jill **is taller** than Jack.

The words "**ran**" and "**is**" are the **verbs** because they tell us what Jack and Jill are up to.

### It has to express a complete thought.

**That means that the sentence should supply enough information so that you are satisfied. If the sentence reads like the following examples, you would know that something is missing:**

Because Jack and Jill were running up the hill.

Jack and Jill are.

Running up the hill in order to go to university.

Here are some more examples of **subjects** and **verbs** in a complete sentence:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject** | **Verb** |  |
| Jill | runs | to the well. |
| The well | is located | on top of a hill. |
| It | is | full of water. |
| Jack and Jill | are exhausted | when they get to the well. |
| Jill | shouts. | Be careful! |

**In a sentence the subject comes before the verb. However, sometimes the roles are reversed, i.e. in questions:**

Then it looks like this:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Verb** | **Subject** | **Verb** |  |
| **Are** | Jack and Jill | **running** | up the hill? |
| **Don't** | they | **know** | that it is exhausting? |

To find the subject, ask yourself:

"What word is the sentence describing?"  
"Who or what is doing the action in the sentence?"

To find the **subject** in a question, turn the question into a statement.

* **Jack and Jill** are really running up the hill.
* **They** don't know that it is exhausting.

To find the verb ask yourself: "What did the subject do?"

* Jack and Jill **ran** up the hill.
* They **don't know** that it is exhausting.

# 1.2Types of Sentences

There are four (4) types of sentences: declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative.

**1.2.1Declarative sentence** (it makes a statement): a sentence that tells something. Use a period (full stop) at the end of a statement.

e.g. Ducks lay eggs in the spring.

**1.2.2Interrogative sentence** (question): a sentence that asks something. Use a question mark at the end of a question.

e.g. Is that a lion ?

**1.2.3Exclamatory sentence** (exclamation): a sentence that shows a strong feeling. Use an exclamation mark at the end of an exclamation.

e.g. You really surprised me !

What a beautiful place this is !

**1.2.4Imperative sentence** (command): a kind of sentence that gives an order or direction. Use a period at the end of a command.

e.g. Stand up.

Please open the door.

**1.3Differences between Sentences, Clauses and Phrases**

## 1.3.1Sentences

Sentences are made of two parts: the subject and the predicate. They express a complete thought.

The subject is the person or thing that acts or is described in the sentence. The predicate, on the other hand, is that action or description.

Complete sentences need both the subject and the predicate.

e.g. She eats an apple.

Leila is beautiful.

## 1.3.2Clauses

All clauses have a subject and a predicate. Sentences can be broken down into clauses.

e.g. The boy is going to the school, and he is going to eat there.

This is a complete sentence composed of two clauses.

There are mainly two types of clauses: independent clauses and subordinate clauses.

**Independent clauses** act as complete sentences, while **subordinate clauses** cannot stand alone and need another clause to complete their meaning.

e.g. Independent clause: “The boy went to the school.”  
 Subordinate clause: “After the boy went to the school…

A phrase is a group of two or more grammatically linked words that **do not** have subject and predicate. A phrase acts as parts of speech inside clauses. That is, they can act as nouns, adjectives, adverbs and so on.

# 2 CLAUSES

In [grammar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grammar), a **clause** is a pair or group of words that consists of a [subject](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subject_%28grammar%29) and a [predicate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predicate_%28grammar%29). The most basic kind of [sentence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sentence_%28linguistics%29) consists of a single clause; more complicated sentences may contain multiple clauses. There are two types of clauses : independent clauses and dependent clauses.

-If a [clause](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/bldcls.html#clause) can stand alone as a [sentence](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/subjpred.html#sentence), it is an **independent clause.**

**e.g. Independent :** The Prime Minister is in Ottawa

-Some clauses, however, cannot stand alone as sentences: in this case, they are **dependent clauses** or **subordinate clauses**. Consider the same clause with the [subordinating conjunction](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/conjunct.html#subordinating%20conjunction) "when" added to the beginning: **e.g. Dependent:** When the Prime Minister is in Ottawa

In this case, the clause could not be a sentence by itself, since the [conjunction](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/conjunct.html#conjunction) "when" suggests that the clause is providing an explanation for something else. Since this dependent clause answers the question "when?".