

English Sentence Structure

A **simple sentence** contains a subject and a verb, and it may also have an object. However, it contains only one independent clause.

The following statements are true about sentences in English:

- A new sentence begins with a capital letter.
- A sentence ends with punctuation (a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point).
- **He** obtained his degree.
- A sentence follows Subject + Verb + Object word order.
- **He** (subject) **obtained** (verb) **his degree** (object).
- A sentence must have a complete idea that stands alone. This is also called an independent clause.

A **compound sentence** contains at least two independent clauses. These two independent clauses can be combined with a comma and a coordinating conjunction or with a semicolon.

- She completed her literature review, and she created her reference list.

A **complex sentence** contains at least one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. Dependent clauses can refer to the subject (who, which) the sequence/time (since, while), or the causal elements (because, if) of the independent clause.

If a sentence begins with a dependent clause, note the comma after this clause. If, on the other hand, the sentence begins with an independent clause, there is not a comma separating the two clauses.