

Sentence Structure 1

Sentences provide us with the **outline** for the clear written communication of our ideas. The aim in writing is always to write in **complete** sentences which are correctly punctuated. A complete sentence always contains **a verb**, expresses a **complete idea** and **makes sense standing alone**.

Top Tips for Superb Sentences

1. **Vary Your Sentence Length**

If your sentences are **too short** your writing will appear clunky, and the reader will soon become bored. Yet, if your sentences are **too long** their value becomes lost and the reader becomes confused with what you’re trying to say.

So, use a **combination** of short, medium and long sentences in your work. When used correctly, short sentences can add impact, whilst using longer sentences can help you develop a key idea, add in details and build to an important conclusion.

**Play around with sentence length so longer, detail-filled sentences are interspersed with shorter, snappier sentences to add impact and sum up an idea.**

1. **One Idea Per Sentence**

Each sentence should contain **one idea**. Make sure you don’t try to fit two separate points into one long sentence.

This means you need to omit **digressions** (shifts in focus) from your writing, so each point is strong and stays on topic. Also, omit any **deviations** (unrelated details).

Every word in your work should be there for a reason. They are there to provide additional information that supports your ideas.

**Get rid of any irrelevant details and you’ll improve your sentence structure and make your writing stronger.**

**4. Don’t Lose the Main Idea**

Complex sentences are often **necessary** in formal or academic writing. You cannot just write in short, sharp sentences as you’ll never be able to give the details or build the arguments necessary.

But complex sentences can be hard to follow. You may have spent hours crafting the perfect argument for your work, yet this brilliant idea may not stand out if your sentence structure buries it deep within your sentences**. Include the main idea early in a sentence to ensure your point is always clear.**

1. **Use Linking Words**

Ideally your writing will **flow** and each point will be **logically connected to the next**. Whenever you switch topics, ideas or perspectives, you need to give the reader a cue.

Linking words improve your sentence structure. Without them, your work would simply read as a list of unrelated ideas and statements.

**Some common linking words:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ADDITION** | **CONTRAST** | **SEQUENCE** | **CONSEQUENCE** |
| In addition, | Nevertheless | For example, | Therefore |
| Furthermore | Yet | To illustrate | As a result, |
| Similarly, | Alternatively, | For instance, | Therefore |
| Also | Conversely | To exemplify | To conclude |
| Likewise, | On the other hand, | Earlier | To summarise |
| Moreover | In contrast | At this point | In conclusion |

**Remember!** When you’re proofreading your work, try and pay attention to how often you’re using linking words. If you notice you have to include these words between most of your sentences, you may be jumping between ideas too much. If this is the case, spend some time reorganising your writing so related ideas are grouped together.

1. **Read Out Loud**

Reading out loud to yourself is a great way to check your sentence structure. **Read** **slowly** and pause according to the punctuation you’ve used. You’ll soon be able to tell whether a comma is needed or not.

If you find you need to catch a breath while reading a sentence, try splitting it in two.