

Sentence Structure (Syntax)

Curriculum: NOVICE and ADVANCED

Created by: Dar Bagby

Definition: Syntax is the structure of sentences. A **sentence** is a group of words arranged in a certain order which, when tied together, conveys an idea, a description, or an event.

Goals: 1) Be able to recognize good and bad syntax
2) Be able to recognize and construct a good sentence of each type (simple, complex, compound, compound-complex)

Tools: 1) the following items: one sock, a snack-size food storage bag, and several feet of ribbon (or string)
2) a dry erase board (or flip chart) and appropriate marker
3) a copy of HANDOUTS (#1 and #2) for each enthusiast

Ice Breaker: Give the sock to one enthusiast, the food storage bag to another, and the ribbon (or string) to another.

- 1) Ask the person with the sock, "Is that enough to keep both of your feet warm?"
Discuss the fact that he/she does not have everything necessary to complete the task. Compare it to syntax (a sentence fragment).
 - 2) Tell the person with the food storage bag, "You have half of a turkey left over and need to keep it in the fridge. Can you save it in that bag?"
Discuss how it isn't big enough to do the job. Compare it to syntax (more explanation is needed to complete an entire thought, idea, description).
 - 3) Tell the person with the ribbon or string, "Tie a **tiny** bow, but use all of the ribbon (or string). Why do you have so much?"
Discuss how there is too much unnecessary ribbon (or string) to complete the task. Compare it to syntax (too wordy).
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Lesson

- Distribute HANDOUT #1 and ask the enthusiasts to follow along as you discuss the lesson. Encourage them to take notes on the HANDOUT sheets.
- Write key words and examples on the dry erase board or flip chart; because there are so many terms involved in this lesson, it will be a good idea to allow the enthusiasts to see them on both their HANDOUT and on the board (or chart).

I. All sentences are composed of a subject and a predicate and may or may not include objects.

A. Subject

1. A person, place, object, or abstract concept
2. Answers who or what the sentence is about
 - a. a **simple subject** is a word or group of words that act as a subject
(e.g., The **dog** barked.)
 - b. a **complete subject** is the simple subject and its modifiers
(e.g., The **big white dog** barked.)
 - c. a **compound subject** is made up of two or more nouns or pronouns linked by either *and* or *or*
(e.g., The **dog and its mate** barked.)
 - d. a **complete compound subject** is made up of a compound subject and its modifiers.
(e.g., The **big white dog and its long-haired mate** barked.)

B. Predicate

1. Verb
 - a. describes the action the subject performs
 - b. contains objects that are affected by the subject's actions
2. Answers what happens and/or what is described
 - a. a **simple predicate** is made up of a verb only
(e.g., The dog **barked**.)
 - b. a **complete predicate** is made up of the verb and its modifiers
(e.g., The dog **barked viciously**.)
 - c. a **compound predicate** contains two or more verbs with or without objects, or a verb with one or more objects linked by *and* or *or*
(e.g., The dog **barked and snarled at the strangers**.)
 - c. a **complete compound predicate** is made up of a compound predicate and its modifiers
(e.g., The dog **barked and snarled viciously at the dark-clothed strangers wearing hoods**.)

C. Independent and dependent clauses

1. Independent clause contains a subject and a verb
 - a. expresses a complete thought
 - b. is a complete sentence
 - c. independent marker words are connectors used at the beginning of an independent clause and can begin a sentence that can stand alone
(e.g., also, consequently, furthermore, however, moreover, nevertheless, nonetheless, therefore)
 - d. coordinating conjunctions can be used as connectors at the beginning of an independent clause (e.g., and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet)
2. Dependent clause contains a subject and a verb
 - a. does not express a complete thought
 - b. cannot be a sentence
 - c. dependent marker words are added to the beginning of an independent clause, making it a dependent clause (e.g., after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, if, in order to, since, though, unless, until, whatever, when, whenever, whether, while)

D. Objects

1. A direct object receives the action and always answers what or whom
2. An indirect object answers to whom or what the action was done
(e.g., The quarterback threw **the football** [direct object] to **the wide receiver** [indirect object]).

II. Typical word order in a sentence

- A. Simple: Subject – Verb – Direct Object – Indirect Object
- B. Expanded: Subject – Verb – Object – Manner – Place – Time (all six parts are not required, but if you use all six, this is the recommended order)

III. Modifiers and appositives

- A. Modifiers are words that describe other words. (e.g., The **fuzzy little** rabbit hopped up onto the **big** pile of **orange** carrots and **leafy** lettuce.)
 1. Can appear in either the subject or the predicate
 2. May be single words, phrases, or complete clauses
- B. Appositives rename the noun or pronoun preceding them
 1. Use a comma to separate it from the rest of the sentence if the appositive is not essential
 2. Example: Adrian talked to his **family** physician, **Dr. Cromwell**, about his **embarrassing** condition. (family and embarrassing are modifiers; Dr. Cromwell is an appositive, which is not necessary for the sentence to make sense, so it is set off by commas)

IV. Basic sentence structures

- A. A **simple sentence** is an independent clause.
- B. A **compound sentence** contains two or more simple sentences.
- C. A **complex sentence** is a combination of an independent clause and a dependent Clause.
- D. A **compound-complex sentence** contains a combination of a compound and a complex sentence.

V. The four types of sentences

- A. Declarative (e.g., The wind blew my hat off my head.)
 1. Makes a statement
 - a. relays information
 - b. AND/OR relays an idea
 2. Ends with a period
 3. Essays and reports use declarative sentences almost exclusively
- B. Imperative (e.g., Go chase my hat.)
 1. Conveys a command or request
 2. OR can express a wish or desire
 3. Ends with a period or an exclamation point depending on the strength of emotion expressed
 4. Can be as short as one word when the subject is implied (e.g., Hurry!)
- C. Exclamatory (e.g., My hat is getting away!)

1. Expresses strong emotion
2. Always ends with an exclamation point
- D. Interrogatory (e.g., Will you please retrieve my hat?)
 1. Always asks a question
 2. Always ends with a question mark

VI. Run-on sentences and sentence fragments

- A. Run-on sentences occur when two or more independent clauses are unseparated by any form of punctuation. (e.g., Addison gave a treat to the dog she gave a toy to the cat.)
- B. Sentence fragments occur when an incomplete thought or a dependent clause is treated like a complete sentence. (e.g., Because the dog and cat had been especially good that day.)

Activity: Distribute HANDOUT #2 and writing utensils. Allowing them to use HANDOUT #1, have the enthusiasts circle their answers to the questions (give them about 6-7 minutes). When everyone is finished, go over the answers, clearing up any doubts they may have about the examples.

HANDOUT #2 Answer key

Answer the following statements by circling TRUE or FALSE.

1. All clauses are sentences. FALSE
2. Every sentence must contain a subject and an object. FALSE
3. A compound sentence contains at least two simple sentences. TRUE
4. An exclamatory sentence asks a question. FALSE
5. The following is an example of a run-on sentence: *Three boys went camping, but it rained the whole time they were there everything was soaked.* TRUE
6. The following is an example of a sentence fragment: *While we were at the grocery store our dog ripped up one of our couch cushions.* FALSE
7. An interrogatory sentence always ends with a question mark. TRUE
8. A complete compound subject can be as short as one word. FALSE
9. A predicate is a verb. TRUE
10. An independent clause expresses a complete thought. TRUE
11. Syntax is the structure of sentences. TRUE
12. The following is an example of an imperative sentence: *Eat!* TRUE
13. In the following sentence, Noah is an appositive: *One of my best friends, Noah, went to Peru with the Peace Corps.* TRUE
14. In the following sentence, **Faith** is the subject: *Yellow is Faith's favorite color.*
FALSE
15. A simple predicate is made up of a verb and its modifiers. FALSE

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- Discussion:
- 1) Why do you think it's necessary to understand sentence structure when writing a story?
 - 2) When you read a story with bad syntax, does it make you want to put the story down and not finish reading it?
 - 3) Do you suppose you can become a recognized author who can sell a lot of books if you use bad syntax in your writing? Why or why not?

Sentence Structure (Syntax)

Handout #1: NOVICE and ADVANCED

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Definition: Syntax is the structure of sentences. A **sentence** is a group of words arranged in a certain order which, when tied together, conveys an idea, a description, or an event.

Lesson

I. All sentences are composed of a subject and a predicate and may or may not include objects.

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1. Conveys a command or request
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 4. Can be as short as one word when the subject is implied (e.g., Hurry!)
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Sentence Structure (Syntax)

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Answer the following statements by circling TRUE or FALSE.

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2. Every sentence must contain a subject and an object. TRUE FALSE
3. A compound sentence contains at least two simple sentences. TRUE FALSE
4. An exclamatory sentence asks a question. TRUE FALSE
5. The following is an example of a run-on sentence: *Three boys went camping, but it rained the whole time they were there everything was soaked.* TRUE FALSE
6. The following is an example of a sentence fragment: *While we were at the grocery store our dog ripped up one of our couch cushions.* TRUE FALSE
7. An interrogatory sentence always ends with a question mark. TRUE FALSE
8. A complete compound subject can be as short as one word. TRUE FALSE
9. A predicate is a verb. TRUE FALSE
10. An independent clause expresses a complete thought. TRUE FALSE
11. Syntax is the structure of sentences. TRUE FALSE
12. The following is an example of an imperative sentence: *Eat!* TRUE FALSE
13. In the following sentence, **Noah** is an appositive: *One of my best friends, Noah, went to Peru with the Peace Corps.* TRUE FALSE
14. In the following sentence, **Faith** is the subject: *Yellow is Faith's favorite color.*
TRUE FALSE
15. A simple predicate is made up of a verb and its modifiers. TRUE FALSE