



ENGLISH REVISION AID 9)

Compound and Complex sentences

Short sentences can be useful as a writing tool to make something sound more effective, but many times it feels odd to read if there are too many short sentences all together.

To make your writing more interesting, you can use either compound or complex sentences. To make a compound sentence, all you need are two or more simple sentences joined together by a conjunction. You can tell that it is a compound sentence by taking away the conjunction and seeing if the two clauses by themselves still make sense:

I love reading, but I hate horror stories → *I love reading + but + I hate horror stories*

Both sentences here make sense by themselves as they are complete.

Complex sentences, however, depend on the conjunction to bring together **clauses** – groups of words containing a verb and a subject. With these sentences, if you take away the conjunction, one or more of the clauses will not make sense by themselves:

She read the book because it was interesting.

- **she read the book = complete short sentence**
- **because = conjunction**
- **it was interesting = subordinate clause.** By itself this sentence does not make sense – what was interesting? Because it depends on the rest of the sentence, we call it a subordinate clause.

Whenever it gets dirty, John cleans his car.

- **Whenever = conjunction.** Yes, they can go at the beginning of sentences too!
- **It gets dirty = subordinate clause.** By itself this sentence does not make sense – what was dirty? Because it depends on the rest of the sentence, we call it the subordinate clause.
- **John cleans his car = complete short sentence**

Be careful!

Commas **cannot** be used as conjunctions in this case because they can't be used to 'stick' short sentences and clauses together:

Incorrect – *she read the book, it was interesting.*

Correct – *she read the book **because** it was interesting.*

This is a rule for both compound and complex sentences.