



THE COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCE

32a The compound-complex sentence

A compound-complex sentence is made up of two or more simple sentences or independent clauses (this is the compound part) and one or more subordinate or dependent clauses (this is the complex part).

- While she waited for a sign from the employees, other shoppers sneaked into the toy store, and they were the ones fortunate enough to find the most popular toy for Christmas.
- Dependent Clause
Independent Clause
Independent Clause

When you punctuate a compound-complex sentence, you use the rules for both compound and complex sentences. For instance, in the above sentence, the dependent adverbial clause appears at the beginning of the sentence; thus, it needs a comma between it and the independent clause. In addition, the combination of a comma and coordinating conjunction is used to join together the two independent clauses.



EXERCISE 1

Directions: Label the sentence type (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex) for each sentence in this paragraph.

- _____ It is often difficult to figure out where a language actually begins.
- _____ The problem is that historical records only date back so far.
- _____ There are usually no recordings of early language; we can only guess at their initial sounds and words.
- _____ Historical documents that include symbols, characters, and drawings can help.
- _____ Language changes quickly, and that also complicates investigating the beginnings.
- _____ For instance, English dictionaries add and delete words during each publication period.
- _____ Words that may be slang today can be common words in a decade.
- _____ Languages rarely add new conjunctions, subordinators, or prepositions; however, they do add new nouns, verbs, and adjectives quite frequently.
- _____ It is a historical linguist's job to analyze the history of languages.
- _____ Even though this task can be frustrating at times, it can also be quite rewarding.

DID YOU KNOW?

How old is English? While this isn't an easy question to answer, Old English, a language that would look and sound foreign to modern English speakers, is thought to have been established when Germanic tribes, most notably the Anglo-Saxons, arrived to the British Isles in 449 CE. Not until the twelfth or thirteenth century had English evolved to the point that it would be intelligible to modern speakers.



32b

Common sentence errors with the compound-complex sentence

Pay attention to the common sentence errors for both compound and complex sentences, and you will be successful in punctuating a compound-complex sentence.

1. Check for run-on or fused sentences

Run-on/fused sentence → Students who use both American Sign Language and Signed English understand that some of the signs are the same and this makes it easier for them to learn both.

OK → Students who use both American Sign Language and Signed English understand that some of the signs are the same, and this makes it easier for them to learn both.

2. Check for comma splices

Comma splice → Students who use both American Sign Language and Signed English understand that some of the signs are the same, this makes it easier for them to learn both.

OK → Students who use both American Sign Language and Signed English understand that some of the signs are the same, and this makes it easier for them to learn both.

3. Check for fragments

Fragment → Students who use both American Sign Language and Signed English understand that some of the signs.

OK → Students who use both American Sign Language and Signed English understand that some of the signs are the same, and this makes it easier for them to learn both.