

## Compound Sentences

A compound sentence joins two or more independent clauses with a coordinator such as *for*, *and*, *but*, or a *semi-colon*.

Independent clauses are two phrases that can stand alone as a complete thought. They're not dependent upon one another to express a complete thought, but they tie together similar ideas.

This makes compound sentences distinct from complex sentences, which contain an independent clause joined by at least one dependent clause. A dependent clause does not form a complete thought and cannot stand alone.

### Independent Clause

An independent clause contains three things:

A subject (something or someone that the sentence is about)

An action (a verb - something that is being done)

A complete thought (there are no questions as to meaning at the end of the sentence)

### Coordinator

There are seven coordinating conjunctions in the English Language, which are used to link the independent clauses:

For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet and So

You can use the acronym FANBOYS to help you remember the seven coordinating conjunctions.

When you have two independent clauses joined by one of these coordinators, usually a comma is required, before the coordinator.

### Semi-colon

Compound sentences and semi-colons work hand in hand. After all, they both join independent clauses. The trick with semi-colons is to use them when the two independent clauses are related ideas, as in the example below.

I'm looking forward to our dinner tonight; you're going to love dining on the water.

### Examples of Compound Sentences

*Alex likes to fish, and he is going fishing on Friday.*

- “Alex likes to fish” is an independent clause where “Alex” is the subject, “likes” is the action, and a complete thought is expressed.
- “He is going fishing on Friday” is an independent clause where “He” is the subject, “is going” is the action, and a complete thought is expressed.
- The coordinator “and” is used, and a comma is correctly placed before “and.”

*Becky wishes she could be younger, for everyone else in the program is half her age.*

- “Becky wishes she could be younger” is an independent clause where “Becky” is the subject, “wishes” is the action, and a complete thought is expressed.
- “Everyone else in the program is half her age” is an independent clause where “Everyone else in the program” is the subject, “is” is the action, and a complete thought is expressed.
- The coordinator “for” is used, and a comma is correctly placed before “for.”

## Compound vs. Complex Sentences

Only independent clauses joined by one of the above coordinating conjunctions can be considered a compound sentence.

If you ever see an independent clause joined by a dependent clause, you're looking at a complex sentence. For example:

When I visit my mother, I eat cookies.

This is not a compound sentence. "When I visit my mother" is a dependent clause (doesn't express a complete thought) and a coordinator is not used.

Compound sentences can make your writing rich and colorful. While beginner writers learn to put together simple sentences first, they will soon find that compound sentences provide added detail and tend to make paragraphs more engaging.

