

**Example:** The dog barked *when the raccoon toppled the can.*

“When the raccoon toppled the can” is a dependent clause, since it cannot stand alone.

## Types of Sentences

The way independent and dependent clauses are combined can be used to divide sentences into the following four categories: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex.

**Simple Sentences** are one independent clause.

**Example:** The raccoon toppled the can.

**Compound Sentences** are more than one independent clause.

**Example:** The raccoon toppled the can, and the dog barked.

Note: Coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so – *fanboys*) or semicolons connect independent clauses.

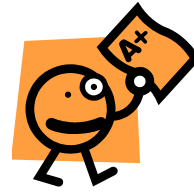
**Complex sentences** are an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses.

**Example:** The dog barked when the raccoon toppled the can that was by the garage.

Note: “When” and “that” introduce the dependent clauses in this sentence.

**Compound-complex sentences** are more than one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses.

**Example:** The dog barked and I jumped when the raccoon toppled the can.



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## Student Academic Learning Services

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# Student Academic Learning Services

## Sentence Basics

## What is a Sentence?

A sentence is the expression of a **complete thought** which makes sense in isolation.

When written, a sentence must begin with a **capital letter** and finish with **end punctuation**, which could be a period, exclamation mark, or question mark.

A sentence must also include a **subject** and a **predicate**.

## Subjects and Predicates

### Simple and Complete Subjects

The simple subject is the noun that is doing the acting (or being) in the sentence, and the complete subject is this word and any others that describe it.

**Example:** *The big raccoon in the yard loudly toppled the green garbage can.* “Raccoon” is the simple subject, and “The big raccoon in the yard” is the complete subject.

### Simple and Complete Predicates

The simple predicate is the main verb in a sentence, and the complete predicate is everything that is not part of the subject.

**Example:** *The big raccoon in the yard loudly toppled the green garbage can.* “Toppled” is the simple predicate, and “loudly toppled the green garbage can” is the complete predicate.

## Subjects, Verbs and Objects

Another way to identify important words in a sentence is to divide them into the above categories. The subject still has the same role, and the main verb and the simple predicate are the same, but the object is another noun that has the main verb done *to* it.

**Example:** *The big raccoon in the yard loudly toppled the green garbage can.*

“Raccoon” is still the subject, “toppled” is the verb, and “can” is the object.

**Important:** Not all sentences have objects.

## Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

The reason that not all sentences have objects is because *transitive* verbs need them but *intransitive* (sometimes called *non-transitive*) verbs don’t. Some verbs can be both.

### Examples:

**Sally hugged her stuffed raccoon.**

The verb “to hug” is transitive, because there must be another noun being hugged.

**Sally sneezed.**

“To sneeze” is intransitive, since it is not something that can be done to something else.

**Sally hasn’t eaten.**

**Sally hasn’t eaten a cookie.**

“To eat” can be both transitive and intransitive.

## Direct and Indirect Objects

The objects that have been discussed are direct. Indirect objects receive the direct object.

**Example:** *Sally gave the stuffed raccoon to her little brother.*

“Raccoon” is the direct object and “brother” is the indirect object.

## Independent and Dependent Clauses

All clauses contain a subject and a verb. There are several kinds of clauses, but the distinction between independent and dependent clauses is the most important to understand. Dependent clauses may also be called *subordinate* clauses.

### Independent Clauses

An independent clause is a complete thought that can stand on its own. It always contains a subject and a verb.

**Example:** *The raccoon topped the can, and the dog barked.*

Each italicized independent clause could also be its own sentence.

### Dependent (Subordinate) Clauses

A dependent clause must be used with an independent clause to add more meaning. While a dependent clause contains a subject and a verb, it sounds incomplete, usually because of its first introductory word. (*see over* →)