

Sentence Punctuation Patterns

An **independent clause** is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought. An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence.

Tara finished writing her book at Peet's Coffee.

A **dependent clause** is a group of words that contains a subject and verb but does not express a complete thought. A dependent clause cannot stand alone as a sentence. Often a dependent clause is signaled by a **dependent marker word**.

When Tara finished writing her book ...

Pattern #1: Simple Sentence

This pattern is an example of a simple sentence:

Independent clause [.]

Example: **Professors are concerned about students' poor punctuation skills.**

Pattern #2: Compound Sentence

Independent clause [,] **coordinating conjunction** **independent clause** [.]

There are seven coordinating conjunctions: **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.**

Example: **Professors are concerned about students' poor punctuation skills, but they aren't sure what to do about the problem.**

Pattern #3: Compound Sentence

This pattern is an example of a compound sentence with a semicolon:

Independent clause [;] **independent clause.**

Example: **Professors are concerned about students' poor punctuation skills; they aren't sure what to do about the problem.**

Pattern #4: Compound Sentence

This pattern is an example of a compound sentence with an independent marker:

Independent clause [;] **independent marker** [,] **independent clause** [.]

Example: **Professors are concerned about students' poor punctuation skills; therefore, they have begun to ask the Writing Studio for help.**

Pattern #5: Complex Sentence

This pattern is an example of a complex sentence with a dependent marker:

Dependent marker **dependent clause** [,] **independent clause** [.]

Some common dependent markers are: **after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, if, in order to, since, though, unless, until, whatever, when, whenever, whether, and while.**

Example: **Because professors are concerned about students' poor punctuation skills, they have begun to ask the Writing Studio for help.**

Pattern #6: Complex Sentence

This pattern is an example of a complex sentence with a dependent marker:

Independent clause **dependent marker** **dependent clause** [.]

Example: **Professors are concerned about students' poor punctuation skills because lack of proper punctuation makes the students' ideas unclear.**

Pattern #7: Complex Sentence

This pattern includes an independent clause with an embedded non-essential clause or phrase:

First part of independent clause [,] **non-essential clause or phrase** [,] **rest of independent clause** [.]

A non-essential clause or phrase is one that can be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence or making it ungrammatical. In other words, the non-essential clause or phrase gives additional information, but the sentence can stand alone without it.

Example: **Many professors, including those from the S.T.E.M. fields, are concerned about students' poor punctuation skills.**

Pattern #8: Complex Sentence

This pattern includes an independent clause with an embedded essential clause or phrase:

First part of an independent clause **essential clause or phrase** **rest of the independent clause** [.]

An essential clause or phrase is one that cannot be removed without changing the overall meaning of the sentence.

Example: **Many professors who are concerned about students' poor punctuation skills have asked the Writing Studio for help.**

