

General

Academic writing uses a variety of sentence types, some simple, some more complex. You need this variety for two reasons; firstly, simple sentences are sometimes not good enough to describe complicated issues; secondly, variety of sentence length and grammar is less boring to read.

To achieve this variety, think about sentence structure.

Sentences

A sentence is something with a **subject**¹ and **main verb**². It starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop. Anything else is a phrase. There are 3 main types of sentence;

Simple

A simple sentence has just one subject and verb (but it might have lots of other words as well eg adjectives, adverbs etc) If you want a linking word, use a long one for a new sentence, or see the following;

Compound

A compound sentence is two simple sentences joined by a short linking word, eg and/but/so/or.

The sentences in both of the above are independent because they could stand alone.

Complex

A complex sentence is one of the above, plus a complex linking word followed by a dependent part. It can go in reverse order, as in the example.

Dependent part

This follows the linking word in complex sentences. It could be;

- another **sentence**³
- an **adjective**⁴
- a **noun**⁵
- an **-ing verb**⁶ (participle)

This depends on which linking word you use. 'Although', for example can be followed by an adjective or a sentence; 'despite' is followed by a noun or an -ing verb.

Sentences

London¹ is² a great city.

A ~~great city.~~ = phrase, not sentence
Is ~~a great city.~~

Simple

sentence 1 *long link.* *sentence 2*
London is a great city. However, it is expensive.

London is a great city. It is expensive, however.

Compound

sentence 1 *short link.* *sentence 2*
London is a great city but it is expensive.

Complex

sentence 1 *complex link.* *dependent part*
London is a great city although it is expensive.

London is a great city, although expensive.

complex link. *dependent part* *sentence 1*
Although it is expensive, London is a great city.

Although expensive, London is a great city.

Dependent part

London is a great city although **it is expensive**³.

“ “ although **expensive**⁴.

“ “ despite the **expense**⁵.

“ “ despite being **expensive**⁶.

Linking words

Below are types of linking words used with complex sentences;

*contrast*¹

*cause/effect*²

*relative pronouns*³

*conditionals*⁴

*participles*⁵

Remember to use all types of linking words and sentences, not just complex ones. You need flexibility, range and variety for good academic writing, so try and use everything.

See also; writing units

Contrast/cause and effect

See also; grammar units

Relative pronouns/conditionals/
participles

Linking words

The business was profitable. However, it failed.

The business was profitable but it failed.

*Despite*¹ being profitable, the business failed.

There had been a fall in costs. Therefore profits rose.

Profits rose because there had been a fall in labour costs.

Profits rose *because of*² a fall in labour costs.

The trainee had experience in marketing. He helped in the sales campaign.

The trainee, *who*³ had experience in marketing, helped in the sales campaign.

The trainee had experience in marketing, *which*³ helped in the sales campaign.

Perhaps they need staff. In that case, they could advertise.

*If*⁴ they need staff, they could advertise.

The students were expected to work long hours so they rarely saw each other.

*Expected*⁵ to work long hours, the students rarely saw each other.