



The Writing Center

DLA: Basic Sentence Patterns

This DLA is a writable PDF form. You can enter your answers directly into this document.

YOU MUST DOWNLOAD AND SAVE THIS FILE TO YOUR COMPUTER.

Do not complete this form in a web browser. You will not be able to save your work.

Student Name:

Important Note

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review **ONE** DLA per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

Learning Outcomes

Through independent work, you will learn about basic sentence patterns and practice composing correct sentences.

Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

DLA Video Review

If you would like to watch a brief video that reviews parts of [Basic Sentences DLA content](#), please use the QR code on the right:



Understanding Basic Sentence Patterns

A key component to writing is that it should not only make sense grammatically, but the ideas should also connect and flow smoothly from one to another. One way to make sentences flow smoothly is to use various sentence patterns.

Key parts to every sentence:

1. *Subject*: the *who* or *what* in the sentence doing the action or expressing the relationship or condition in the sentence
 - **José** is fluent in Portuguese.
2. *Verb*: expresses the action, condition, or relationship to the subject
 - Myrna **speaks** German.

Sentence Pattern 1: Simple Sentence

A simple sentence contains a **subject**, **verb**, and expresses a complete thought.

Sentence Patterns:

S-V.

- José **studied** for the exam.

A simple sentence can have a compound subject or a compound verb, but there is still only one main subject-verb pair.

- **Elaine, Lily, and Stephanie** **needed** someone to proofread their papers. (*compound subject*)
- **He** **reviewed** the assignment and **wrote** practice sentences. (*compound verb*)

Sentence Pattern 2: Compound Sentence

When you want to join two complete sentences, use a semicolon; a comma and a *coordinating conjunction* (FANBOYS); or a semicolon, conjunctive adverb, and comma.

Sentence Patterns:

S-V; S-V.

S-V, [*coordinating conjunction*] S-V.

S-V; [*conjunctive adverb*], S-V.

- José **wrote** his paper; **[his]** classmates then **gave** him feedback on his writing.
- José **studied**, **but** **Chris** **fell** asleep.
- José **passed** the exam; **however**, **Chris** **failed** it.

When using a coordinating conjunction, only use a comma when joining two complete sentences. The following sentence is a simple sentence with a compound verb; therefore, no comma is used with *but*.

- José **had** a rough start last semester **but was doing** great by the end.

Sentence Pattern 3: Complex Sentence

Complex sentences consist of an independent clause and a dependent clause. These types of sentences can be made in a variety of ways. One way is to use a *subordinating conjunction*; any clause that begins with a subordinating conjunction is a dependent clause. This dependent clause can then be joined to an independent clause to make a complex sentence.

Sentence Patterns:

[*Subordinating conjunction*] S-V, S-V.

S-V [*subordinating conjunction*] S-V.

In the following examples, the **[dependent clause]** is boxed. Note that no comma is used when the dependent clause follows the independent clause.

- **Because** he had studied hard, José aced the exam.
- José aced the exam **because** he had studied hard.

Another way to create a complex sentence is by using an adjective clause. Adjective clauses begin with a *relative pronoun* and modify a noun. See the Adjective Clauses DLA for more practice with this topic.

- The dog **that is wearing a red collar** belongs to my neighbor.
- Dr. Jacobs, **who practices cardiology**, wants to retire in three years.
- The student **whose bag is on the sofa** stepped out to use the restroom.

Noun clauses can also be used to create complex sentences. Noun clauses function in the same way as nouns and noun phrases, which means they can serve as subjects, objects, and complements.

- **Whoever borrowed the restroom key** will bring it back soon. (noun clause as subject)
- The professor knows **that students have questions about the test.** (noun clause as object)
- My brother's problem is **that he works too many hours.** (noun clause as subject complement)

Sentence Pattern 4: Compound-Complex Sentence

These sentences have at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause. The following examples show how you can make complex sentences with a subordinating conjunction; however, keep in mind that noun clauses and adjective clauses are also dependent clauses.

Sentence Patterns:

S-V, [coordinating conjunction] S-V [subordinating conjunction] S-V.

[Subordinating conjunction] S-V, S-V, [coordinating conjunction] S-V.

- **José** wrote a rough draft, **and** **he** went to the tutoring center **because** **he** needed help.
- **Although** **he** **hadn't** **studied**, **Chris** **expected** to pass, **but** **he** **was** wrong.

Connecting Ideas Using Coordinators and Subordinators

The following chart shows coordinators and common subordinators used when moving from point to point *within* a paragraph. Refer to the pink Combining Clauses handout for more information.

	Coordinating Conjunctions (compound sentence)	Conjunctive Adverbs and Transitional Expressions (compound sentence)	Subordinating Conjunctions (complex sentence)
Addition	and	also, moreover, furthermore, in addition	
Alternative	or		
Consequence	so	consequently, therefore, as a result	
Contrast	but, yet	nevertheless, however, in contrast, on the other hand	even though, although, while, though
Negation	nor		
Purpose			so that
Reason	for		because, since

So vs. So That

Note that in the chart above, *so* is a coordinating conjunction and *so that* is a subordinating conjunction. They have different meanings; *so* expresses a consequence or result, whereas *so that* expresses a purpose or goal.

- Kendra lost her umbrella, so she needs to buy a new one. (“*So*” introduces the result of Kendra losing her umbrella.)
- Kendra went to the store so that she could buy a new umbrella. (“*So that*” introduces the purpose of Kendra going to the store.)

So that can be reduced to *so*, but it remains a subordinating conjunction and is not used with a comma.

- Kendra went to the store so she could buy a new umbrella.

Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

1. Online Quiz

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/basicsentencepatternsdlquiz> and take the DLA quiz. You must score at least 75% on the quiz before meeting with a specialist. After you complete the task, please take a screenshot of the page that has your score and show it to your specialist. Do not exit the quiz until you take the screenshot.

2. Coordination and Subordination Practice

Combine the pair of sentences below using both coordination and subordination strategies. Refer to the chart of connectors to choose an appropriate connecting word and sentence pattern.

- Myrna couldn’t speak English.
- She was fluent in Spanish, French, and German.

1. Use a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.
2. Create a simple sentence using at least two verbs.
3. Use a transitional expression in a compound sentence.
4. Use a subordinating conjunction in a complex sentence.

Choose 3a or 3b Below

3a. Review Your Own Writing

Collect some of your written work. Find examples of the different sentence patterns and write them down below.

Simple Sentence

Compound Sentence

Complex Sentence

Compound-Complex Sentence

If you do not have your own essay to work with, please complete the supplemental activity below (3b).

3b. Sentence Writing

Write two sentences for each of the four sentence patterns above. You should have written a total of eight sentences.

4. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you've learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the "appointment summary report" through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under "appointment summary reports" (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is "completed" or "not completed." If it is marked as "not completed," book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at writingcenter@mtsac.edu or (909) 274-5325.

If you are an individual with a disability and need a greater level of accessibility for any document in The Writing Center or on The Writing Center's website, please contact the Mt. SAC Accessible Resource Centers for Students, access@mtsac.edu, (909) 274-4290.

Revised December 2025