Sentence Pattern Identification and Sentence Combining

College Readiness Initiative
Sentence Identification

Read the following paragraphs from some well-known novels. For each paragraph, you will be asked to identify a specific type of sentence (simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex).
Simple Sentences

Identify only the simple sentences in the following paragraph.

Remember that *sentence length* is not a determining factor; a simple sentence has only one "subject" and one "verb" (an independent clause) although either the subject or the verb can be compound.
"I closed not my eyes that night. My internal being was in a state of insurrection and turmoil; I felt that order would thence arise, but I had no power to produce it. By degrees, after the morning's dawn, sleep came. I awoke, and my yesternight's thoughts were as a dream. There only remained a resolution to return to my ancient studies, and to devote myself to a science for which I believed myself to possess a natural talent."

from *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley
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Simple Sentences

In the previous paragraph, there are 3 simple sentences.

The first two simple sentences contain only a subject and verb with several complements.

The 3rd simple sentence contains a compound complement using the word *and*, which causes it to look like a compound sentence when in reality it is a simple sentence.
Compound Sentences

Identify only the compound sentences in this paragraph.

Remember that compound sentences have two or more independent clauses joined with a conjunction and the correct punctuation.
"The sea cows went on schlooping and grazing and chomping in the weed, and Kotick asked them questions in every language that he had picked up in his travels: and the Sea People talk nearly as many languages as human beings. But the Sea Cow did not answer, but Sea Cow cannot talk. He has only six bones in his neck where he ought to have seven, and they say under the sea that that prevents him from speaking even to his companions; but, as you know, he has an extra joint in his fore flipper, and by waving it up and down and about he makes a sort of clumsy telegraphic code." from "The White Seal," The Jungle Book by Rudyard Kipling
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Compound Sentences

There are 2 compound sentences in the previous paragraph.

The 1\textsuperscript{st} compound sentence contains 3 independent clauses joined with the word \textit{and}.

The 2\textsuperscript{nd} compound sentence contains 2 independent clauses joined by a \textit{semicolon}. 
Complex Sentences

Identify only the complex sentences in this paragraph.

Remember that complex sentences contain one independent clause and at least one dependent clause.
"I accepted the offer. When Mr. Wemmick had put all the biscuit into the post, and had paid me my money from a cashbox in a safe, the key of which safe he kept somewhere down his back, and produced from his coat-collar like an iron pigtail, we went upstairs. The house was dark and shabby, and the greasy shoulders that had left their mark in Mr. Jaggers's room seemed to have been shuffling up and down the staircase for years. In the front first floor, a clerk who looked something between a publican and a rat-catcher--a large pale puffed swollen man--was attentively engaged with three or four people of shabby appearance, whom he treated as unceremoniously as everybody seemed to be treated who contributed to Mr. Jaggers's coffers." from *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens
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Complex Sentences

The previous paragraph contains 2 complex sentences.

The independent clauses are bolded and underlined while the dependent clauses are highlighted in red.

Each complex sentence has only one independent clause, which distinguishes them from the compound sentence in the middle of the paragraph.
Compound-Complex Sentences

Identify only the compound-complex sentences in these paragraphs.

Remember that compound-complex sentences contain two or more independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.
"On the following Monday, Mrs. Bennet had the pleasure of receiving her brother and his wife, who came as usual to spend the Christmas at Longbourn. Mr. Gardiner was a sensible, gentlemanlike man, greatly superior to his sister as well by nature as education. The Netherfield ladies would have had difficulty in believing that a man who lived by trade, and within view of his own warehouses, could have been so well bred and agreeable. Mrs. Gardiner, who was several years younger than Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Philips, was an amiable, intelligent, elegant woman, and she was a great favourite with all her Longbourn nieces. Between the two eldest and herself especially, there subsisted a very particular regard. They had frequently been staying with her in town.” from Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
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Compound-Complex Sentences

There is only 1 compound-complex sentence in the previous paragraph.

Note that the sentence has only dependent clause, which is highlighted in red and two independent clauses joined by the conjunction *and*. 
Sentence Combining

Most writers avoid using too many simple sentences because their writing might appear to be childish or unsophisticated. On the same note, most writers will not avoid using a variety of compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences, or else they miss the opportunity to show relationships between ideas using fewer words.

The key to being an effective writer is to find a “happy medium” between the amount of each sentence type you use in your writing.
Sample 1

Here is an example of a series of mostly simple sentences based on a paragraph from a well-known novel:

“A solitary figure was coming toward him. She was coming from the end of the long, brightly lit corridor. It was the girl with dark hair. Four days had passed since he had run into her. He had run into her outside the junk shop. She came nearer. She had her arm in a sling. It wasn't noticeable because of the color. It was the same color as her overalls. Probably she had crushed her hand. She probably crushed her hand while swinging round one of the big kaleidoscopes at work in the Fiction Department. The novels were "roughed in" on the big kaleidoscopes. Crushing a hand was a common accident in the Fiction Department.”
Sentence Combining

Although most readers are able to understand the meaning of the previous paragraph, the amount of word repetition slows down the writing for no particular reason.

Look back at the paragraph and identify spots where the writer could combine sentences using conjunctions or semicolons to make the paragraph flow better.
Sample 1

Compare the previous version of the paragraph to the actual version written by George Orwell:

"A solitary figure was coming toward him from the other end of the long, brightly lit corridor. It was the girl with dark hair. Four days had gone past since the evening when he had run into her outside the junk shop. As she came nearer he saw that her right arm was in a sling, not noticeable at a distance because it was of the same color as her overalls. Probably she had crushed her hand while swinging round one of the big kaleidoscopes on which the plots of novels were 'roughed in.' It was a common accident in the Fiction Department." from 1984 by George Orwell
Sentence Combining

Now it’s your turn to practice. Rewrite the following paragraph (consisting of simple sentences).

Although it is fine to leave some sentences as they are written, you should use as many compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences as possible to show relationships between the details. Make sure you punctuate the new sentences correctly.
1. I am a woman.
2. The woman is generally nice.
3. The woman usually gets along with people.
4. My philosophy is very simple.
5. I try to keep from getting into arguments.
6. I don't see any point in fighting.
7. Fighting just takes up time in my day.
8. My day is already pretty busy.
9. I have a problem occasionally.
10. I have to disagree with other people sometimes.
11. I don't want to make other people angry.
12. Some people get angry.
13. They get angry when people disagree with them.
14. Disagreement doesn't mean disapproval.
15. It's possible to disagree with others.
16. It's possible to keep people from getting angry.
17. It's not easy to keep people from getting angry.
Sentence Combining

After you write your paragraph(s), check to make sure you've combined as many thoughts as possible.

Tip: A shorter sentence usually commands more emphasis than other sentences. Use short sentences only when it is effective or important to the meaning you're trying to convey.
Practice 1 Answer

Below is one way which you could have combined the sentences to create a paragraph that contains a variety of sentence types.

“I am a woman. The woman is generally nice and usually gets along with people. My philosophy is simple; I try to keep from getting into arguments because I don't see any point in fighting. Fighting just takes up time, and my day is already pretty busy. Still, I have a disagreement occasionally. I have to disagree with other people, but I don't want to make other people angry because some people get angry when people disagree with them. Disagreement doesn't mean disapproval. It's possible to disagree with others and keep them from getting angry, but it’s not easy to keep people from getting angry.”
The previous paragraph contained a variety of sentences. The simple sentences are highlighted in red. Note each contains only one subject and verb. The compound sentences are highlighted in green. Each contains at least 2 independent clauses joined with a conjunction. The remaining sentences are compound-complex sentences containing independent and dependent clauses joined with transitional words and conjunctions.
You have now completed the tutorial on sentence pattern identification and sentence combining. Good Job!