

LEARNING ABOUT SENTENCES

1

What are sentences?

A sentence is a group of words that make sense together, which contains a **subject** (a noun or pronoun which represents the doer of the action) and **one verb** (the action).

These are sentences:

Billy went to school. (Pic)

noun verb

She plays the violin. (Pic)

pronoun verb

Australia has lots of kangaroos. (Pic)

noun verb

HINT: The rest of the sentence (apart from the subject and the verb) is called the **predicate** (meaning 'what **is said** about what goes before', ie the noun and verb).

2

These are **not** sentences:

Billy (*only one noun and nothing else*)

plays (*only one verb and nothing else*)

lots of kangaroos (*an adverb, a preposition and a noun, nothing else*)

to school (*a preposition and a noun, and nothing else*)

Pics and then put big crosses over the top to negate each.

RULE: A sentence must have **a noun** (or pronoun) **and a verb**. It can be as short as two words (I came.) or a paragraph long – but it must **always** contain at least **one noun** and **one verb**.

3

What sorts of sentences are there?

It all comes out of the rule above. **One noun and one verb** makes a

SIMPLE SENTENCE (*simple, monastic banner*)

Billy is washing the dishes. (**Pic**)

Noun verb predicate (what is said about Billy washing up)

The kangaroo is eating the grass in the paddock. (**Pic**)

Noun verb predicate (what is said about the kangaroo)

4

Two or more nouns and verbs make a

COMPLEX SENTENCE

Billy **came** home, **threw** his bags down on the sofa, **rushed** into the kitchen and **made** himself a huge peanut butter sandwich, which he **took** into the lounge room, **switching** on the TV as he **went**, and **settling** himself down **to watch** another episode of his favourite program. (48 words)

Pic of Billy watching TV

HINT: You can have as many words in a complex sentence as you like – as long as they are put together with enough nouns and verbs to carry the action and the sense along. The world record for a sentence is 1,287 words in a novel by William Faulkner (the great American writer) – but then he was a Nobel Prize winner! Really long sentences are **not** recommended for beginners.

5

Why use complex sentences?

Simple sentences are good when you're starting out. But they *can* become boring. Here's a reminder:

Billy came home. He threw his bags down on the sofa. He rushed into the kitchen. He made himself a peanut butter sandwich. He took the sandwich into the lounge room. He switched on the TV. He switched the TV on. He went in. He settled himself down. He really liked his favourite program. He settled down to watch his favourite program. (62 words, 12% more, with the same content)

Same pic, but flashed up repeatedly, to suggest 'boring'

HINT: There is nothing 'wrong' with this – but it **is** repetitive and tedious. The pronoun 'he' (used 10 times) is very irritating.

6

How can we make simple sentences into complex sentences?

Two devices are used to join simple sentences together:

CONJUNCTIONS (specialised joining words)

Mary-Jane came to class. Mary-Jane played her guitar.
(2 simple sentences)

Mary-Jane came to class, **and** played her violin. (1 complex sentence)

(Pic)

RELATIVE PRONOUNS (words that refer back to a preceding name/noun)

Billy is a boy. Billy kissed Mary-Jane. (2 simple sentences)

Billy is the boy **who** kissed Mary-Jane. (1 complex sentence)

(Pic)

HINT: Relative pronouns, like other pronouns, stand in for something already mentioned. (In the example, *who* stands in for *Billy*.)

7

What are conjunctions?

Conjunctions are connecting words (from the Latin 'join together'). Here are the most common ones.

And	I hope to do well and get into the finals.
But	I am a good tennis player, but my friend is better.
As	She bought a brand new red dress, as she needed to match her red shoes.
Because	I wear gloves because I don't want to get a splinter.
Or	Cover your nose or you will sneeze on everyone.
Although	I think he's right, although I'm not completely sure.
Though	The show went on, though the actors were unwell.
Whether	We'll go to the football, whether it rains or shines.
When	I want you to come with me, when you are ready.

Where	We like to eat here, where they are so friendly.
While	Read this, while I make a cup of tea.
Until	I don't want to see you until you are nice again.
Before	I'll look outside, before deciding what to wear.
After	I'll give you an answer, after I talk to my Mum.
Since	Let me introduce you, since you're new here.

Pic of kid playing tennis

HINT: Sometimes you 'need a comma – especially when the second part of the sentence represents a contradiction or unexpected idea. Often however the two simple sentences can be combined without a comma.

8

What are relative pronouns?

A relative pronoun refers back to the noun or pronoun earlier in the sentence (ie it 'relates' back). Here are the most common ones.

that	<i>This is the house. Jack built the house.</i> This is the house that Jack built. (<i>that</i> refers to <i>house</i>)
who	<i>He is the boy. He kissed Mary-Jane.</i> He is the boy who kissed Mary-Jane. (<i>who</i> is a subject pronoun) (<i>who</i> refers to <i>boy</i>)
Whom	<i>She is the girl. I gave her first prize.</i> She is the girl to whom I gave first prize. (<i>whom</i> refers to <i>girl</i>)
which	<i>This is the book. I recommend this book.</i> This is the book which I recommend. (<i>which</i> refers to <i>book</i>)
whose	<i>This is the man. I borrowed his phone.</i> This is the man whose phone I borrowed. (<i>whose</i> refers to <i>man</i>)

HINT: When we refer to a person, we use the *personal* pronoun **who** – **not** 'that'. That should refer only to things and animals. So 'He is the boy **who** kissed Mary-Jane' is right! But 'He is the boy *that* kissed Mary-Jane' is wrong!