# Super Sentences: Simple, Compound, and Complex

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|---|---|---|---|
| **Teacher** | | **Class** | Grade 3 |
| **Subject** | ELA | **Topic** | Simple, compound, and complex sentences |
| **Date** | | **Room** | |
| **Lesson length** | 60 minutes | **Country** | United States |

> Students learn to build simple, compound, and complex sentences. They draw a three-panel comic and write one matching sentence per panel.

## Curriculum links

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- Produce simple, compound, and complex sentences [2].

## Learning objectives

- Students will write one simple, one compound, and one complex sentence.
- Students will use commas correctly with and, but, so and helper words.
- Students will speak and check if ideas sound complete and finished.

## Success criteria

- I can write a simple sentence with one full idea.
- I can join two ideas with a comma and and, but, or so.
- I can add a helper part with because, when, if, or after.

## What students already know

Ask: Is Barked loudly a whole sentence? Listen for: No, it is missing who barked and it does not sound finished.

## Key words

| | |
|---|---|
| **simple sentence** | one full idea that can stand alone as a complete thought [8]. It has one independent clause and no dependent clauses [4]. |
| **compound sentence** | two full ideas joined with and, but, or, so [3][17]. It has two independent clauses but no dependent clauses [4]. |
| **complex sentence** | one full idea plus a helper part that needs the other part to make sense [4]. It has one independent clause and at least one dependent clause [4]. |
| **comma** | small mark , that shows a short pause and comes before and, but, or so in a compound sentence [3][7]. |
| **helper word** | small starting word like because, when, if, after that makes a part need a partner [7]. |

## Materials

- Slides 1-12 projected
- Video clip 1 Sentence Song - three types (0:00-1:34) on slide 6
- paper folded in 3 panels, one per student
- pencils and crayons

## Before the lesson

- Fold paper into 3 panels for each student and set out pencils and crayons
- Load Slides 1-12 and test Video clip 1 (0:00-1:34) sound on slide 6

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- whiteboard and markers
- Write model comic sentences ready for panel 1, 2, and 3

## Lesson outline

**0–10 min** **Starter** 10 min · Whole class

*Hook students and surface the problem of joining two short ideas into one sentence.*

**YOU DO**

1. Show Slide 1 Super Sentences! Simple, compound, and complex and read the title together.
2. Say the hook: Cartoon writers mix short and long sentences to keep stories exciting. Today you are the writer.
3. Show Slide 2 mystery: I wanted to play. It started to rain. How to make one sentence?
4. Model joining them: I wanted to play, but it started to rain! Point to the comma before but.

**STUDENTS DO**

1. Read the two short sentences aloud together.
2. Turn to a partner and try joining them with and, but, or so.
3. Share one joined version with the class.

**Say:** Cartoon writers mix short and long sentences to keep stories exciting. Today you are the writer. Look at my two lonely sentences. Watch how I give them a bridge to make one super sentence.

**Worked example:** Step 1: Idea 1 = I wanted to play. It can stand alone. Step 2: Idea 2 = It started to rain. It can stand alone. Step 3: Pick joiner but to show surprise. Step 4: Join with comma + but: I wanted to play, but it started to rain!

**Ask:** Are I wanted to play and It started to rain finished ideas by themselves? (Yes, each one can stand alone as a complete thought.) · What changed when we added comma but between them? (Two full ideas became one longer sentence that tells more together.)

**Check understanding:** Thumbs up if I wanted to play, but it started to rain sounds finished. If thumbs are mixed, repeat both parts alone and together.

**Support:** Say each part slowly and ask: Can this part be a sentence by itself? **Stretch:** Ask students to try the same two ideas with so and explain how the meaning changed.

Use: Slides 1-2

10–25 min **Teaching** 15 min · Whole class

*Teach the three sentence powers and how commas and helper words work.*

**YOU DO**

1. Show Slide 3 One Idea or Two and Slide 7 Three Sentence Powers cards for Simple, Compound, Complex.
2. Show Slide 4 Magic Joiners: and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet join two full ideas [3][17]. Explain there are 7 small joining words for compound sentences.
3. Show Slide 10 Build Them Right and model each type: The bell rang. The bell rang, so we lined up. We lined up because the bell rang.
4. Think aloud about complete and helper parts: an independent clause forms a complete sentence on its own, while a dependent clause needs another clause [4].

**STUDENTS DO**

1. Read each model sentence aloud and clap for one full idea or two claps for two ideas.
2. Give thumbs up for can stand alone and thumbs down for needs a partner as teacher reads 6 parts.
3. Repeat helper words because, when, if, after together.

**Say:** A simple sentence tells one full idea. A compound sentence joins two full ideas with a comma and and, but, or so. A complex sentence joins one full idea plus a helper part that starts with because, when, if, or after.

**Worked example:** Simple = one full idea: The bell rang. Compound = two ideas, comma, joiner: The bell rang, so we lined up. The comma goes right before the conjunction [3]. Complex = main idea plus helper: We lined up because the bell rang. Because it started to rain cannot stand alone; it needs a main part, like "We stayed inside."

**Ask:** How is a compound sentence different from a simple sentence? (Simple has one full idea, compound has two full ideas joined with and, but, or so.) · Why can Because it started to rain not be a sentence alone? (It is a helper part that needs a main part to make a complete sentence.) · Where does the comma go in a compound sentence? (Right before and, but, or so, except for very short sentences [3].)

**Check understanding:** Use mini whiteboards: write S, Cd, or Cx for The dog barked, I wanted to play, but it rained, When it rained, we stayed inside. Reteach any type below 80% correct.

**Support:** Keep the Slide 7 cards showing and color underline each full idea in a different color so students can see the two parts clearly [15]. **Stretch:** Ask students to explain what extra information the helper part adds, like when or why.

Use: Slides 3-4, 7, 10

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25–35 min **Sing and Share** 10 min · Whole class

*Hear the three types in a song and decide together when short or long sentences work best.*

**YOU DO**

1. Show Slide 5 question: When is a short sentence best? When is a long one best? Let pairs share quickly.
2. Play Video clip 1 Sentence Song - three types (0:00-1:34) on Slide 6 once.
3. Replay key lines and pause to name: one-idea sentence, and, but, so joining ideas, because, when helper parts.
4. Chart answers: short for fast action, long for joining or explaining why.

**STUDENTS DO**

1. Listen and point up when they hear and, but, so or because, when.
2. Think, pair, share when a short sentence is best and when a long one is best.
3. Vote with hands for favorite opening for an adventure.

**Say:** Listen for one-idea sentences. Spot and, but, so joining ideas. Hear because, when helper parts. After we sing, you will tell me when a writer should use a short sentence and when to use a longer one.

**Worked example:** Too many simple sentences will make writing sound choppy [3]. Robot: The dog ran. The dog barked. I laughed. Smoother: The dog ran and barked, so I laughed. Writers vary sentences to make writing interesting and lively [3].

**Ask:** When is a short simple sentence best? (For a fast, clear action or surprise, like The door creaked.) · When is a compound or complex sentence best? (To join ideas together or explain why or when something happened.)

**Check understanding:** Cold-call two pairs for short-best and long-best examples. If answers are vague, model one more robot-to-smooth pair.

**Support:** Give sentence starters: A short sentence is best when ___. A long sentence is best when ___.
**Stretch:** Have students compare The door creaked and When the door creaked, we held our breath and tell which builds more suspense.

Use: Slides 5-6, Video clip 1 (0:00–1:34)

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35–53 min **Main Activity** 18 min · Pairs

*Write one simple, one compound, and one complex sentence in a three-panel comic.*

**YOU DO**

1. Show Slide 9 task: Sort 6 strips into simple, compound, complex. Build 1 of each type about school. Read aloud and check for full ideas.
2. Model a 3-panel comic about rain: panel 1 simple The dog barked. panel 2 compound with two equal ideas joined by and, but, or, so [9]. panel 3 complex with one main idea plus helper starting with because or when [4].
3. Hand out 3-panel paper and frames: The dog ___. I wanted to ___, but ___. I stayed inside because ___.
4. Circulate as pairs draw quick pictures and label each panel simple, compound, or complex.

**STUDENTS DO**

1. Draw a quick rain or school picture in each of the 3 panels.
2. Write one matching sentence per panel and label simple, compound, complex.
3. Read the three sentences to a partner and check each sounds finished.

**Say:** You are the writer. Panel 1 write one simple sentence. Panel 2 write one compound sentence with a comma and and, but, or so. Panel 3 write one complex sentence with because or when. Draw a quick picture to match.

**Worked example:** Panel 1 Simple: The dog barked. One full idea. Panel 2 Compound: I wanted to go outside, but it started to rain. Two full ideas with comma but. Panel 3 Complex: I stayed inside because it started to rain. Main idea plus helper part starting with because.

**Ask:** How do you know panel 2 is compound? (It has two full ideas with a comma before and, but, or so.) · How do you know panel 3 is complex? (It has one full idea plus a helper part with because, when, if, or after.)

**Check understanding:** Partners point to the two complete ideas on each side of the joiner and underline the helper word. Collect panels and check labels before plenary.

**Support:** Provide sentence frames: The dog ___. I wanted to ___, but ___. I stayed inside because ___. Model built together first with only a few word choices. **Stretch:** Have students add a second complex sentence where the helper part comes first, with a comma after it, like Because it rained, we stayed inside [7].

Use: Slide 9

53–60 min **Plenary** 7 min · Whole class

*Return to success criteria and check who can name and fix each sentence type.*

**YOU DO**

1. Show Slide 11 vote: Which opening would you use for an adventure story? Read the three choices aloud.
2. Show Slide 12 True or false and read each line: A simple sentence has one full idea. One independent clause makes a simple sentence. A compound sentence has one full and one helper idea. A compound sentence has one full and one helper idea [4].
3. Fix the false one together: a compound sentence has two full ideas, a complex sentence has one full and one helper idea [4].
4. Link back to I can statements and preview next writing.

**STUDENTS DO**

1. Vote for an opening and tell a partner why short or long works best.
2. Show true or false with thumbs for each Slide 12 line.
3. Correct the false sentence with the class.

**Say:** Which opening would you use for an adventure story? The door creaked. The door creaked, and the light went out. When the door creaked, we held our breath. Tell your partner your pick and why. Then we will be sentence doctors.

**Ask:** A compound sentence has one full and one helper idea. True or false? (False. It has two full ideas. One full plus helper is complex.) · A simple sentence has one full idea. True or false? (True. One independent clause makes a simple sentence.)

**Check understanding:** Exit tickets on sticky notes: write Cd or Cx for two dictated sentences. If many miss, reteach helper words tomorrow.

**Support:** Provide a one-page checklist with examples of each type and where to look for the comma [7].
**Stretch:** Have students suggest a different joiner or helper word that still keeps the sentence correct and explain the change.

Use: Slides 11-12

## Common mistakes

| Mistake | How to spot it | How to fix it |
|---|---|---|
| Writing a helper part alone, like Because it started to rain. | Student reads it aloud and it sounds unfinished or teacher asks Can this stand alone and they hesitate. | Add the main idea: We stayed inside because it started to rain. A dependent clause needs another clause to make a complete sentence [4]. |
| Missing the comma before and, but, or so in a compound sentence. | Two full ideas run together with only the joiner word, like I wanted to play but it rained. | Insert comma before the joiner: I wanted to play, but it rained. Use a comma before the coordinating conjunction [3][7]. |
| Calling any long sentence with and a complex sentence. | Student labels The dog ran and barked as complex because it is long. | Ask Can both sides stand alone? Teach underline main clause and circle helper part; if no because, when, if, after part, it is not complex. |

## Support

- Provide sentence frames: The dog ___. I wanted to ___, but ___. I stayed inside because ___.
- Color underline each full idea in a different color and use a checklist with examples for commas [15][7].

## Stretch

- Have students add a second complex sentence where the helper part comes first, with a comma after it.
- Have students change the joiner word in a compound sentence and explain how meaning changed.

## For the LSE or teaching assistant

Sit with target pairs during Main Activity. Read frames aloud, help them point to two full ideas, and prompt Can it stand alone for helper parts.

## Check for understanding

| Question | Answer |
|---|---|
| Which is simple: The bell rang or The bell rang, so we lined up? | The bell rang. |
| Fix it: I wanted to play but it started to rain. | I wanted to play, but it started to rain. |
| Which is complex: We stayed inside or We stayed inside because it rained? | We stayed inside because it rained. |

## Homework

Write one simple, one compound, and one complex sentence about dinner at home.

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