



## 2: How to write a good sentence

In any piece of written work, you'll say a lot of things – many different points, pieces of evidence, etc. You should always help the reader follow this easily. That means keeping the things in order, and sentences are the best way to do that. To write a good sentence, then, start with three basic questions:

- What do I want my reader to learn more about? (**subject**)
- What do I want my reader to know about that subject? (**predicate**)
- What other ideas or information do I want to connect with that point?

The first and second questions are the basis of your sentence. If you can use your subject and predicate to highlight the important things, or the basis of the sentence, then all the information will be clearer and more powerful.

So, always make sure the subject and predicate are easy to see. Keep them close together (immediately next to each other if possible) and close to the start of the sentence. This means the reader won't have to wait, or keep a lot of other information in mind, while looking for the sentence's main point.

The article examines 270 employees divided into 28 work teams from the Manufacturing and Product Development departments of Ford Motor Company in Germany and Great Britain respectively.

Here, the reader needs to know more about “the article” (= a good subject). There's a lot of information about it, so you have a wide choice of predicates. The writer made a judgement that the research's size (“270 employees”) was fundamental to their point (more than, say, which countries they're from), so that's the predicate. Therefore, the basic sentence is

The article examines 270 employees.

The third question's now crucial. Making an academic argument means you keep your points separate (so the reader can see your progress) but also draw connections between them (so the reader can see how that progress happens). Think about which ideas need to go together into the same sentence – to emphasise their logical connection – and which ones should be separated into their own sentences.

You can add extra information to a sentence in several ways:

**Prepositional phrase**

... from the Manufacturing and PD departments  
... of Ford Motor Company  
... in Germany and Great Britain

**Participle phrase**

... 270 employees divided into 28 work teams

OR

**Adjective clause**

... 270 employees who are divided into 28 work teams

**Adverb**

... in Germany and Great Britain respectively.

This writer's used a good variety of these methods – and always chosen the best one *for that particular idea*. Remember, fit your grammar to your meaning. They've also arranged the sentence so connected ideas are together (e.g. "in Germany" must be beside "Ford Motor Company" to get its proper meaning).

You can also add other subject-predicate units (called "clauses") into the same sentence, with

**Compound sentences**

(clauses joined with a word like "and", "but", "because")

Figure 5 shows a positive correlation, but it is only weak.

**Complex sentences**

(clauses joined so one can't stand alone and depends on the other)

When we compared the scores in figure 5 and 6, we found a mean difference of 0.1539.

Getting your ideas in order affects how the sentence is understood. So, to turn your meaning into a sentence, think about

- which ideas are most fundamental (make them the subject/predicate)
- which ideas are most/least important
- which ideas need to be closely connected (keep them next to each other) or separated
- what you want your reader to see first/next/next/last