



# WRITING CENTER

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## Sentence Types

A complete sentence contains at least two parts:

- *Subject*
- *Verb*

More complicated sentences may also include:

- *Phrases* (i.e. prepositional phrases beginning with “in,” “of,” or “for”)
- *Clauses* (i.e. relative clauses such as “which” clauses)

Sentences fall into three main types:

- *Simple sentence*
- *Compound sentence*
- *Complex sentence*

Use these different types of sentences to make your style more varied.

- **Simple sentence:** A **simple sentence** contains **one subject** and **one verb**:

*Martin Luther King Jr. died in 1968.*

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Prepositional Phrase</b>
<i>Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	<i>died</i>	<i>in 1968.</i>

**Simple sentences** can also take an **object** (the thing being acted on):

*Martin Luther King, Jr. led the Civil Rights movement.*

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Object</b>
<i>Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	<i>led</i>	<i>the Civil Rights movement.</i>

- **Compound sentence:** A **compound sentence** joins together **two complete simple sentences** with a **comma** and **conjunction** (i.e. “and,” “but,” or “or”):

*Martin Luther King, Jr. led the movement, but many southern whites opposed him.*

Subject 1	Verb 1	Object	Comma + Conjunction	Subject 2	Verb 2	Object
<i>Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	<i>led</i>	<i>the civil rights movement.</i>	<i>, but</i>	many southern whites	<i>opposed</i>	<i>him.</i>

- **Complex sentence:** A **complex sentence** begins with a word like “although,” “if” or “because.” A **complex sentence** contains **one complete** simple sentence (called the “independent clause,” and **one incomplete** simple sentence (called the “dependent” clause because it *depends* on the other clause to complete the thought). Use a comma to join the two clauses.

*Though Martin Luther King, Jr. died in 1968, he inspires many today.*

Dependent Clause	Comma	Independent Clause
Though Martin Luther King, Jr. died in 1968	,	he inspires many today

The complex sentence can also be flipped around:

*Martin Luther King, Jr. inspires many today, though he died in 1968.*

Independent Clause	Comma	Dependent Clause
Martin Luther King, Jr. inspires many today	,	though he died in 1968.