



SENTENCE TYPES

While the number of possible sentences one can write is limitless, there are only four types of sentences. Though technical writing often favors simple sentences, good writing uses all four sentence types because variety often creates greater, more engaging readability.

1. A **simple sentence** is simply a sentence that consists of one independent clause (a subject, a verb, and a complete thought).

Example 1.1: The Mars rover detected gas.

Example 1.2: Injecting water into reservoirs can force oil out.

Example 1.3: We use the photovoltaic method of solar power conversion for heating.

2. **Compound sentences** include two independent clauses usually joined together by a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) or a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb (however, furthermore, also, indeed, hence, additionally, thus, therefore).

Example 2.1: The Mars rover detected gas, and this may be evidence of life on Mars.

or

The Mars rover detected gas; therefore, this may be evidence of life on Mars.

Example 2.2: Injecting water into reservoirs can force oil out, but this issue has become politicized.

Example 2.3: The photovoltaic method of solar power conversion is used for electricity; however, the solar thermal method is used for heating.



Sentence Types Continued

3. **Complex sentences** contain an independent clause and at least one dependent clause (a clause that begins with a subordinator like although, even though, before, at, despite, while, if, because, etc.).

Example 3.1: Although research has shown no evidence of life on Mars, the Mars rover detected gas.

Example 3.2: Despite controversy surrounding methods of extraction, injecting water and other chemicals into reservoirs can force oil out.

Example 3.3: Even though the process is relatively simple, the photovoltaic method of solar power conversion is used for heating.

4. A **compound-complex sentence** has at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.

Example 4.1: Although prior research has shown no evidence of life on Mars, the Mars rover detected gas, and this has called for more attention to the red planet.

Example 4.2: Despite controversy surrounding methods of extraction, injecting water and other chemicals into reservoirs can force oil out; however, residents in oil-rich counties may be concerned by this process.

Example 4.3: Even though the process is relatively simple, the photovoltaic method of solar power conversion is used for electricity, but the solar thermal method is used for heating.