**Compound-Complex Sentences**

**The Compound-Complex Sentence Guidelines**

Definition - A compound-complex sentence is a sentence that is composed of two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. Writers use compound-complex sentences to indicate the relative importance and the relationship between the ideas in the different clauses. An independent clause contains one subject + verb pair and expresses a complete thought. When used alone, an independent clause is a Simple Sentence.

\* A dependent clause begins with a subordinating word and contains one subject + verb pair. It does not express a complete thought; therefore, it must be combined with an independent clause to complete the meaning

\* Compound sentences are formed by joining independent clauses together. The process of joining independent clauses together is called coordination. (For more on the correct formation of compound sentences, see the ELC grammar module " Compound Sentences .")

\* Complex sentences are formed by joining one independent clause with one or more dependent clauses. This process is called subordination. (For more on the correct formation of complex sentences, see the ELC grammar module " Complex Sentences .")

\* Compound-complex sentences involve a combination of both compound and complex sentence building techniques.

Example

o Jason shopped for a new truck for several weeks, but he eventually went back and bought the first one that he had looked at because he liked it best of all.

[This sentence contains four clauses. Two of the clauses are independent: "Jason shopped for a new truck for several weeks" and "he eventually went back and bought the first one." Two of the clauses are dependent: "that he had looked at" and "because he liked it best of all." The combination of two (or more) independent clauses with one (or more, as in this sentence) dependent clauses makes a compound-complex sentence.]

Step One: Subordination

Each dependent clause must be linked with an independent clause to complete its meaning; therefore, the first step in building a compound-complex sentence is to link each of the dependent clauses to the specific independent clause that it relates to. The standard methods for building complex sentences (refer to modules 1.3.1 , 1.3.2 , and 1.3.3 ) are used to link each dependent clause to the independent clause that completes its meaning.

Example

o Stan went to the doctor because he could not get rid of his cough; although he ignored the doctor's advice and refused to take the prescribed medication, he complained about not getting better.

+ This sentence contains two independent clauses and two dependent clauses.

+ The first dependent clause ("because he could not get rid of his cough") relates to the first independent clause ("Stan went to the doctor")

therefore, these two clauses are combined according to the standard rule:

Independent Clause + Dependent Clause (no punctuation needed)

which results in the following complex construction:

"Stan went to the doctor because he could not get rid of his cough"

+ The second dependent clause ("although he ignored the doctor's advice and refused to take the prescribed medication") relates to the second independent clause ("he complained about not getting better").

therefore, these two clauses are combined according to the standard rule:

Dependent Clause + , + Independent Clause (comma after dependent clause)

which results in the following complex construction:

"although he ignored the doctor's advice and refused to take the prescribed medication, he complained about not getting better"

Step Two: Coordination

Each independent clause, along with any dependent clauses that are linked with it, is treated as a single unit to be joined with the other independent clause units. The standard methods for building compound sentences are employed to link the independent clause units together.

Example

o Stan went to the doctor because he could not get rid of his cough; although he ignored the doctor's advice and refused to take the prescribed medication, he complained about not getting better.

+ This sentence contains the following two complex constructions

"Stan went to the doctor because he could not get rid of his cough"

- and -

"although he ignored the doctor's advice and refused to take the prescribed medication, he complained about not getting better"

+ When building a compound-complex sentence, each of the two complex constructions is treated as though it were a single independent clause, and the standard method for building compound sentences is used:

Independent Clause + ; + Independent Clause (semi-colon between clauses)

"Stan went to the doctor because he could not get rid of his cough; (first complex construction)

although he ignored the doctor's advice and refused to take the prescribed medication, he complained about not getting better." (second complex construction)

**Compound-Complex Sentence Activities**

Instructions: Read the Guidelines Sheet for Compound/Complex Sentences before you complete the following activities. The Extended Learning Center provides all the books you will need to complete these activities.

Tutoring: You may see a tutor for help with understanding any of the following activities.

Activities:

Grammar textbook work: Do not write in the textbooks. Either photocopy the exercise pages from the text or complete the assignments on your own paper (Note: to utilize your time effectively, write short answers whenever possible, rather than copying entire sentences).

1. Sentence Essentials :

1. Read pages 315-316.

2. Complete practice 9 on page 317.

2. The Little, Brown Handbook (8 th edition) :

1. Read Section 12f (pages 290-291).

3. Worksheet:

1. Complete Worksheet B34.

2. Use the answer key, located in the Extended Learning Center, to check your work.

Turn in all work assigned by your instructor before you take the Compound-Complex Sentence Test.

**The Compound/Complex Sentence**

**PRACTICE TEST**

(4 pages, 10¢/page for print jobs in ELC)

PART I: Some of the following sentences contain errors in punctuation of joined clauses, and some are punctuated correctly. Mark as follows:

“A” if the punctuation is correct.

“B” if the punctuation is incorrect.

1. When the 1960s dawned, the United States was ready to embark on the salvation of the world; the evil of communism was spreading everywhere, and the forces of democracy had to take a stand.

1. Correct

2. Incorrect

2. President John F. Kennedy, who became the embodiment of this call to action, talked about the need to help free nations and he promised that his administration would never allow one form of colonialism to be replaced by another.

1. Correct

2. Incorrect

3. There seemed nothing that American power could not achieve: the United States had become the premier economic and military power in the world.

1. Correct

2. Incorrect

4. The conviction that the United States was unstoppable permeated American culture in the late 1940s and 1950s, this belief colored the way policymakers reacted to social and political change.

1. Correct

2. Incorrect

5. Communists were the new embodiment of evil; because America could provide the money, the leadership, and the technology to defeat the new threat she became the champion of freedom.

1. Correct

2. Incorrect

PART II: Choose the item that correctly completes the Compound/Complex sentence.

6. The administration not only accepted at face value the existence of an international communist conspiracy, but they also formulated \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was designed to contain and eliminate that threat

1. a plan that

2. a plan, that

3. a plan; that

4. a plan—that

7. The plan seemed straight \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ United States should invest resources and apply power until the communists reached their breaking point, just as Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo had reached theirs.

1. forward the

2. forward, the

3. forward: the

4. forward and the

8. President Kennedy sent Vice President \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was raised in the hard-biting politics of central Texas, on a fact-finding mission, but Johnson stayed in Saigon for only four days.

1. Lyndon B. Johnson who

2. Lyndon B. Johnson, who

3. Lyndon B. Johnson; who

4. Lyndon B. Johnson: who

9. At at six feet, four inches, Johnson towered over the Vietnamese, and the muggy heat turned him into a fountain of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the Vietnamese who met Johnson in person did not know what to make of him.

1. sweat, consequently

2. sweat, consequently,

3. sweat; consequently

4. sweat; consequently,

10. Although this big sweaty American giant behaved \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ warmed to him; they laughed when he hovered over them, dripping sweat and shaking their hands.

1. oddly the crowds

2. oddly, the crowds

3. oddly; the crowds

4. oddly: the crowds

PART III: For each of the sentences in the paragraph below, mark as follows:

“A” if the sentence is a Compound/Complex Sentence

“B” if the sentence is not a Compound/Complex Sentence

(11) Even when American policymakers began to see Vietnam for the quagmire it was, disengagement was excruciatingly difficult. (12) Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon all expressed the fear of becoming the first American President to lose a war. (13) Each of them remembered the political abuse Harry Truman had taken from the Republican right wing over the “loss” of China to the Reds, and none of them wanted to be the target of similar abuse for “losing” Vietnam. (14) Domestic politics, as much as the perceived need to stop communism in Vietnam, kept the United States in the war against the better judgment of a number of prominent leaders. (15) Even in the early 1970s, when the war had become an albatross to the Nixon administration, blanket withdrawal was not an option: America needed to maintain credibility around the world.

(16) The effort that started out as a righteous crusade in the late 1940s to save Southeast Asia from communism ended up in the 1970s as a face-saving game to get out of an impossible mess without looking too bad. (17) The war was a colossal blunder born of an odd mixture of paranoia and arrogance; blind to history, the United States saw only communism, not nationalism, in Vietnam. (18) Confident about its role as the premier power on earth, the United States applied military solutions to a problem that was essentially political and cultural; consequently, some historians view Vietnam as the wrong war for the wrong reason. (19) Others hold the opposite view: though costly and unpopular, the Vietnam war held back the tide of communism, which bought time for the weaknesses of that political structure to cause its inevitable collapse. (20) If these questions about the Vietnam war could be answered, then perhaps a great wound in our nation's soul could finally begin to heal.

(All test items adapted from Where the Domino Fell, Third Edition . Olson and Roberts. St. James, NY: Brandywine Press., 1999)

Answer Key: The Compound/Complex Sentence Practice Test

Part I

1. A

2. B

3. A

4. B

5. B

Part II

6. A

7. C

8. B

9. D

10. B

Part III

11. B

12. B

13. A

14. B

15. A

16. B

17. B

18. A

19. A

20. B