

## What's a Sentence?

Let's consider two kinds of sentences: **simple sentences** and **compound sentences**. Below you will find a quick overview of the two structures.

A **simple sentence** contains only **one independent clause (complete thought)**. It has a subject-verb set, and it can stand alone. (That's why it is independent.)

Examples:

Traffic flowed across the narrow bridge. (one subject and one verb)

Traffic and pedestrians flowed across the narrow bridge. (compound subject)

Traffic flowed across the bridge and moved quickly into the city. (compound verb)

Traffic and people flowed across and moved into the city. (compound subject and compound verb)

A **compound sentence** contains at least **two independent clauses**. Each could be a simple sentence by itself.

The two independent clauses must be joined with strong "glue."

That "glue" can be

- a comma with a coordinating conjunction (BOYSFAN)
- a semi-colon (;).

Examples: Traffic flowed across the narrow bridge, **but** it moved quickly into the city.  
Traffic flowed across the narrow bridge, **and** it moved quickly into the city.  
Traffic flowed across the narrow bridge; it moved quickly into the city.

There are two **common errors that beginning writers make when creating compound sentences**.

1. If the two independent clauses run into each other without any "glue", that is a **fused sentence**.

INCORRECT: Traffic flowed across the narrow bridge it moved quickly into the city.

CORRECT: Traffic flowed across the narrow bridge, **and** it moved quickly into the city.

2. Remember, a comma by itself is **not** strong enough to join two independent clauses together. If only a comma is used between them, that error is called a **comma splice**.

INCORRECT: Traffic flowed across the narrow bridge, it moved quickly into the city.

CORRECT: Traffic flowed across the narrow bridge, **and** it moved quickly into the city.

**Fused sentences and comma splices are sometimes called run-ons, and they must be fixed by adding strong "glue."**