

Independent Clauses in Compound Sentences

An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence. An independent clause contains both a subject and a verb, and it expresses a complete thought.

A compound sentence is composed of at least two independent clauses.

Techniques to Join Independent Clauses

There are four techniques used to join independent clauses in a compound sentence:

- a comma and a coordinating conjunction (**for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**).
- a semicolon.
- a semicolon and a transition word (therefore, however, hence, thus...etc.).
- a colon.

You should choose the technique that best fits the context of the sentence.

Comma and Coordinating Conjunction

Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction to join two independent clauses when you want to show contrast or relation between two ideas.

Examples of Compound Sentences with a Comma and Coordinating Conjunction

1. The man was sitting in the restaurant, **but** he was not ordering anything.
2. I was waiting at the bus stop, **and** a man started talking to me.
3. Emily was out of milk, **so** she went to the store.
4. Helen wanted to get a puppy, **but** she is allergic to dog fur.

Semicolon

Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses that are closely related.

Examples of Compound Sentences with a Semicolon

1. He studied for his math class for hours; he felt prepared for the midterm the next day.
2. Juliet loves her little brother; he is generous and kind.
3. My sister is a doctor; she suggested I get the flu shot.

Semicolon and Transition Word

Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses when the ensuing clause begins with a transition word (conjunctive adverb). Remember to use a comma after the transition word.

Examples of Compound Sentences with a Semicolon and Transition Word

1. I enjoy fantasy novels; **therefore**, *The Return of the King* is one of my favorite books.
2. Tom did not want to see Sue; **however**, he knew Sue would get mad if he did not come.

Colon

Use a colon to join two independent clauses when you want to explain or expand on the first independent clause. The capitalization of an independent clause after a colon is optional.

Examples of Compound Sentences with a Colon

1. Kristin had one more thing to say: She wanted to take a family vacation.
2. The reason the 49ers lost is simple: They did not play well.

Activity

Using the techniques outlined above, combine the following independent clauses to create compound sentences. There may be more than one correct answer.

1. The man forgot one important detail. The key was locked inside the safe.
2. Sharon despises the security lines at the airport. However, the security lines are important.
3. She wanted another tutoring session. I helped her schedule a session for tomorrow.
4. David bought his sister a new necklace. It was her birthday.
5. Heather and Shawn attended a Writing Center workshop. It was very helpful.
6. The children went to school. They studied math.
7. Sarah and Clark went to Dallas. They were invited to speak at a conference.
8. Sam loved to watch baseball. He decided to play baseball.
9. The old man lay in bed all day. He was not feeling well.
10. Nicole wanted help writing her essay. She went to the Writing Center.

Answer Key for Activity

Note that answers may vary.

1. detail: The
2. airport; **however**,
3. session, **so** I
4. necklace; it
5. workshop; it
6. school, **and** they
7. Dallas: They
8. baseball; **therefore**,
9. day, **for** he
10. essay; she