



A Review of Four Sentence Structures

Let the letter *I* stand for the independent clause, and let the letter *D* stand for the dependent clause. Let the letters *cc* stand for the coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet*).

I

Simple sentence (Structure: I): A simple sentence consists of one independent clause. You can use a simple sentence to isolate an idea for attention. In his poem "Dover Beach," poet Matthew Arnold began with a simple sentence: "The sea is calm to-night."

I,ccI or I;I

Compound sentence (Structure: I+I or I+I+I): A compound sentence is a sentence that consists of two or more independent clauses. You can use a compound sentence to connect two related ideas of equal or nearly equal importance. Punctuate I,ccI or I;I. From Robert Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening": "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, / But I have promises to keep."

ID or D,I

Complex sentence (Structure: I+D or D+I or D+I+D): A complex sentence is a sentence that consists of an independent clause joined to a dependent clause. You can use a complex sentence to show a primary idea that has a lesser idea in support of it. The independent clause will contain the primary idea. Punctuate D,I or ID. In his poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," William Wordsworth wrote, "I wandered lonely as a cloud, / That floats on high o'er vales and hills, / When all at once I saw a crowd, / A host, of golden daffodils."

I;ID or D,I;I, etc.

Compound-complex sentence (Structure: I+I+D or D+I+I): A compound-complex sentence contains both compound clause structure and complex clause structure. You can use a compound-complex sentence to employ the strategies of compound and complex sentences at once. Punctuate a compound-complex sentence two clauses at a time, according to the rules for compound and complex sentences. Poet William Butler Yeats wrote, "When you are old and grey and full of sleep, / And nodding by the fire, take down this book, / And slowly read, and dream of the soft look / Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep."