

Contrary to the belief of some, writing well is more than a talent. You can learn to write. However, writing means using the language correctly. The English language is a beautiful language when used properly, however it is very structured and complex. First, using the language properly requires a concern for usage, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. You must begin to really look at what you have written. Reading aloud as you write and as you proofread will help you. Your content gets lost if you place mechanical obstacles in the way of the reader.

Using sentences correctly is essential. To begin, you must master the four different kinds of sentences as well as the punctuation of each.

- Simple sentences have ONE independent clause, compound sentences have TWO coordinate, independent clauses. Each of these clauses should have the ability to stand alone.

- A second type, compound sentences, can be combined with a comma preceding a coordinating conjunction; they can also be combined with a semi-colon preceding a transition word which is followed by a comma; a third method uses a semi-colon only. Learn these three methods. However, remember this is only for two equal clauses—coordinates.

- Your third kind of sentence is called complex. The sentence also includes two clauses; however, one clause is dependent and cannot stand alone. The placement of the subordinate clause in the sentence determines the punctuation used. The rule for this is if the subordinate (dependent) clause comes before the independent clause, use a comma. (D, I). However, if the subordinate (dependent) clause comes after the independent clause, no comma is used. (ID)

- Your fourth type is called compound-complex. This sentence consists of two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clause(s). Apply the rules for compound and complex sentences when punctuating.