

# Sentence Structure: The Fab Four

## Sentences

- [Introduction](#)
- [I Know It When I See It: The Sentence](#)
- [Sentence Structure: The Fab Four](#)
- [Sentence Functions: The Four Tops](#)
- [Alley Oops](#)

In [Clauses](#), you learned that there are two types of clauses: independent and dependent. Recall that independent clauses are complete sentences because they have a subject and verb and express a complete thought. Dependent clauses, in contrast, cannot stand alone because they do not express a complete thought—even though they have a subject and a verb. Independent and dependent clauses can be used in a number of ways to form the four basic types of sentences: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. Time to make their acquaintance.

## Simple Sentences: Simple Isn't as Simple Does

A *simple sentence* has one independent clause. That means it has one subject and one verb—although either or both can be compound. In addition, a simple sentence can have adjectives and adverbs. What a simple sentence can't have is another independent clause or any subordinate clauses. For example:

### You Could Look It Up

A **simple sentence** has one independent clause.

- Americans eat more bananas than they eat any other fruit.
- *one subject, one verb*
- David Letterman and Jay Leno host talk shows.
- *compound subject, one verb*
- My son toasts and butters his bagel.
- *one subject, compound verb*

Don't shun the simple sentence—it's no simpleton. The simple sentence served Ernest Hemingway well; with its help, macho man Ernie snagged a Nobel Prize in Literature. In the following excerpt from *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway uses the simple sentence to convey powerful emotions:

- The driver started up the street. I settled back. Brett moved close to me. We sat close against each other. I put my arm around her and she rested against me comfortably. It was very hot and bright, and the houses looked sharply white. We turned out onto the Gran Via.
- "Oh, Jake," Brett said, "we could have had such a damned good time together."
- Ahead was a mounted policeman in khaki directing traffic. He raised his baton. The car slowed suddenly pressing Brett against me.
- "Yes," I said. "Isn't it pretty to think so?"