5 Understanding sentence types

Learning objectives

- To understand different sentence types
- To experiment with a range of sentence types for effect

Key term

Verb: a word like *eat*, *think* or *walk*. Some verbs identify an action; others identify thoughts and feelings

Writers use different types of sentences to add variety to their work. If a writer used the same type of sentence throughout a piece of work it would sound very repetitive. In this section you will look at the different types of sentences and learn how to use them for effect.

SPAG

Simple sentence – a sentence made up of a simple clause with one main **verb**, for example, 'The bike flew down the hill.'

Compound sentence – a sentence made up of two clauses which are coordinated using conjunctions such as *and* or *but*. These clauses will be about the same subject and the conjunction will join the ideas together. Each clause can make sense on its own, for example, 'The bike flew down the hill *and* it was a blur of red and silver.'

Complex sentence – a sentence made up of a main clause and at least one subordinate (dependent) clause. The subordinate clause usually adds extra information to the sentence, but doesn't make sense on its own, for example, 'The bike, like a magnificent soaring bird, flew down the hill.' The clause 'like a magnificent soaring bird' is a subordinate clause as it does not make sense on its own.

Activity 1

Read the paragraph below. While you are reading you need to think about the following:

SPAG

- What type of sentences have been used?
- Does the passage sound interesting?
- Does the writing sound fluent?

White water rafting

The instructor held the dinghy[1] in the water. I climbed into the dinghy. It was yellow rubber. There were six of us in the boat. We were told exactly where to sit. Each person was given an oar. We were instructed to use the oars to paddle. Oars can also be used to push away from rocks.

The instructor pushed us away from the side. We were immediately sucked into the middle of the rapids[2]. The water thrashed against the rubber craft. Waves crashed into the boat. Water swirled around my feet. The water current was violent. We raced towards a waterfall.

I took a deep breath. Our boat surged over the top.

[1] dinghy – a small inflatable rubber boat
[2] rapids – a fast-flowing part of a river

Activity 2

1. Write down two or three sentences to explain what you think about the way the paragraph has been written. SPAG
2. With a partner, write a list of additional words that you would use to describe the rapids and the dinghy. Think about words to describe the movement, the sound and their appearance.
3. Rewrite the paragraph using compound and complex sentences to add extra detail. Try to include a range of simple, compound and complex sentences. You can change the order of words, phrases and sentences to make your work sound more interesting.

Exam link

Try consciously to use different sentence types in your written work, as by adding more detail they will make your writing more interesting. In the exam you should try to include a range of different sentence types, but make sure you punctuate them correctly.

Progress check

Now you have completed the first unit of work in this chapter, think about how confident you feel about reading and analysing non-fiction texts. Read each skill listed below under 'Where am I now?' and complete the box that reflects how you feel about it. Give a reason or example to support your choice, for example, an occasion when you have struggled or an activity you felt very confident about.

Where am I now?	Very pleased – I think I am good at this skill	OK – I do need more practice	One of my weaker areas so I need more practice
Using different reading skills to locate information			
Understanding the features of different texts			
Understanding a writer's perspective and how this can change			
Using different sentence types in my work			