# TYPES OF SENTENCES

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| ***For the consultant***: This is an introductory lesson to teach students the basics in writing. If students seriously struggle to convey their intentions in their writing then use this lesson to teach them the basics. For example, if a student struggles to articulate an indirect question or a fact in their writing, use this lesson to help them distinguish between the two and to write these different formats. This lesson can be used in conjunction with the lessons on the parts of speech, parts of the sentence or punctuation marks. |

**By the end of this lesson you should be able to:**

* Identify the four different types of sentences.
* Write a declarative, interrogative, imperative and an exclamatory sentence.

**Introduction**

A sentence is a group of words that are arranged correctly in order to express a complete statement or idea.

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| **REMEMBER:** A complete statement or idea makes sense on its own. At a bare minimum, a sentence must have a subject (a person or thing that is being or doing something), and a predicate (something being done by the subject, or information about what the subject is / was / will be).  The subject of the sentence can be stated, or it can be “understood” – i.e. not stated explicitly, but able to be inferred from the context. This is the case with commands: “Be on time for the meeting” has the *implied* subject, “you”. In other words it is implied that “**YOU** must be on time for the meeting”.  But the statement, “Always comes to class late” is not a sentence because it really does not have a subject, and we can only guess who the subject might be. Here we are left asking ourselves, who always comes to class late?  A sentence thus expresses a **complete thought**. We do not have to ask questions to fully understand the statement. |

It is important to remember that a sentence must:

1. Begin with a *capital* letter. For example: **The** people are becoming restless.
2. End with a *full stop, question mark or exclamation*. For example: Where is the library**?**

But don’t be fooled! Not every statement that starts with a capital letter and ends with an appropriate punctuation mark is a sentence. People often write fragments of sentences by mistake. Such a statement might look like a sentence at first glance, but when you read it carefully, it is lacking a subject or a predicate, or it expresses an **incomplete thought**. You need to check your own writing vigilantly to make sure that you ALWAYS write full (complete) sentences.

**Types of sentences**

There are four main types of sentences and each of them has a particular purpose.

1. ***Declarative Sentence*** – this type of sentence expresses a statement or fact and ends with a full stop.

Example: Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years.

1. ***Interrogative Sentence*** – its purpose is to ask a question. An interrogative sentence ends with a question mark if it is used to ask a direct question. It can also end with a full stop if it is used to ask an indirect question.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Example: Who is the President of South Africa? [Direct question]

He asked who the President of South Africa is. [Indirect question]

1. ***Imperative Sentence*** – it is used to give commands and requests, and ends with a full stop.

Example: Pay your taxes on time. [Giving a command]

Please ensure that your tax is paid on time. [Making a request]

1. ***Exclamatory Sentence*** – this type of sentence is used to express emotion. It ends with an exclamation mark.

Example: What a peaceful country we live in!

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Here are some useful questions you can ask to determine whether a group of words make a sentence.

* Do the words express a *complete thought* and do they make sense?
* Does the group of words begin with a capital letter?
* Does the group of words end with a full stop, a question mark or an exclamation mark?

**Activity 1**

For each of the topics below, write 4 sentences, 1 for each type of sentence:

1. **Elections**

Elections take place every four-five years in most democracies. (declarative)

Are elections the best type of system to use for putting people into power? (interrogative)

I’m shocked at the turnout for this year’s elections! (exclamatory)

You must vote in the coming elections! (imperative)

1. **Democracy**

1. **Government**

1. For more information on Interrogative Sentences refer to the lesson plan on Question marks. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)