



Sam Houston Writing Center 

Sentence Punctuation Patterns



Punctuation is an important ingredient in written language and its clarity.

Definitions:

An **independent clause** is a statement with a subject, a verb and contains a complete thought.

Example: Some professors at Sam Houston encourage class discussion.

A **dependent clause** is a statement that has a subject and a verb, but does not contain a complete thought.

Example: Because some professors at Sam Houston encourage...

An **essential clause** includes important information.

A **non-essential clause** includes optional information.

The seven **coordinating conjunctions**: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so

Some **independent markers**: therefore, however, moreover, also, consequently

Some **dependent markers**: as if, as, after, then, when, because, before, since, while, if, although, until

A **simple sentence** is a single independent clause and ends with a period, a question mark or an exclamation mark.

Example: Some professors at Sam Houston encourage class discussion.

A **compound sentence** has two independent clauses.

One way to punctuate a compound sentence is by using a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

Example: Some professors at Sam Houston encourage class discussion, so they welcome student questions and concerns.

Example: Some professors at Sam Houston encourage class discussion, and they welcome student questions and concerns.

Another way to punctuate a compound sentence is by using a semicolon.

Example: Some professors at Sam Houston encourage class discussion; they welcome student questions and concerns.

A third way to punctuate a compound sentence is by using a semicolon and an independent marker.

Example: Some professors at Sam Houston encourage class discussion; therefore, they welcome student questions and concerns.

Example: Some professors at Sam Houston encourage class discussion; consequently, they welcome student questions and concerns.

Using a **dependent marker** attached to a dependent clause, **complex sentences** connect a dependent clause to an independent clause.

Example: Because some professors at Sam Houston encourage class discussion, their students participate more.

Example: Some professors at Sam Houston encourage class discussion as it is a good learning technique.

If the dependent clause comes before the independent clause a comma is used after the dependent clause.

Example: Since it is a good learning technique, some professors at Sam Houston encourage class discussion.

A **complex sentence** can also be created by using an **essential clause**, or by using a **non-essential clause**.

Example: Some professors who encourage class discussion have a high student participation rate.

In the above example, the **essential clause** does not need commas.

Example: Some professors, whether in the English or Psychology Department, encourage class discussion.

In the above example, the **non-essential clause** needs commas around the clause.