Basic Sentence Patterns

A basic complete sentence contains, at minimum, a subject and a verb. Most sentences contain an object as well. Below are combinations of different types of subjects and verbs that can be used to make a variety of basic sentences.

**Subject + intransitive verb**

Elizabeth swims.
Dolphins leap.

**Subject + transitive verb + direct object**

John hated lima beans.
Books convey ideas.

**Subject: + linking verb + subject complement**

The sea is beautiful.
You seem worried.

**Subject + transitive verb + indirect object + direct object**

The writer sold his publisher a three-part story.
The pitcher threw the catcher a curve ball.

**Subject + transitive verb + direct object + object complement**

Samantha called her sister a baby.
The king made Gawain a knight.

**Verb + subject + verb…?**

Can Sherry play with us?
Will this train leave on time?

**Verb + (direct/indirect) object**

Leave this room.
Give your exams to the proctor.

**Subject (working as object) + transitive verb**

The queen was laid to rest.
Books were read to the children.
Dinner is served at eight.

Use these basic sentence patterns as the building blocks to build up to longer sentences and entire paragraphs. You can add adjectives to describe the nouns and adverbs to modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Finally, you can combine these basic sentences with other clauses (separated by the appropriate conjunctions and punctuations) to make more complex sentences.

See the handout on commas, semicolons, and periods to help you correctly construct and punctuate complex sentences that contain clauses.