

GRAMMAR GUIDE · IELTS

Complex Sentences

Turn short, simple sentences into the complex structures that raise your band.

Writing**Speaking****Band 7+**

Why this matters for your band

In IELTS Writing and Speaking, a full quarter of your score comes from **Grammatical Range and Accuracy**. To move from Band 6 to Band 7, the examiner needs to see a **variety of complex structures** — not longer or fancier English, just ideas **joined well** inside one sentence. This short guide shows you the three sentence types and the small set of connectors that do most of the work.

What the examiner rewards

“Uses a variety of complex structures” and “produces frequent error-free sentences.” In practice that means mixing simple, compound and complex sentences — and getting your commas and connectors right. Master the handful of patterns here and you cover most of what Band 7 asks for.

How to use this guide

1 Read the explanation

Work through the three sentence types and the connector groups. Say each example aloud.

2 Study the upgrades

See how weak Band 5 sentences become strong Band 7 ones — that is the skill you are building.

3 Do the tasks

Identify, join and correct sentences, then check the answer key and redo anything you missed.

The three sentence types

Every strong answer mixes these three. Band 7 writing leans on the third.

1 · Simple — one idea

A **simple sentence** has one independent clause: a subject and verb that make sense on their own.

SIMPLE Cities are growing quickly.

SIMPLE Public transport reduces traffic.

2 · Compound — two equal ideas

A **compound sentence** joins two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction. Remember them as **FANBOYS**: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. Put a **comma before** the conjunction.

COMPOUND Cities are growing, **but** housing is limited.

COMPOUND Fuel is expensive, **so** more people cycle to work.

3 · Complex — a main idea + a supporting idea

A **complex sentence** joins a **main clause** (stands alone) to a **subordinate clause** (cannot stand alone) using a **subordinating conjunction** such as although, because, while, if, when.

COMPLEX **Although** cities are growing, housing remains limited.

COMPLEX More people cycle to work **because** fuel is expensive.

RULE **Punctuation rule:** if the subordinate clause comes **first**, use a comma; if it comes **second**, usually no comma. Because it rained, we stayed in. / We stayed in because it rained.

Subordinating conjunctions

These small words show the **relationship** between two ideas – contrast, reason, condition, time. Group them by meaning and you will always have the right one ready.

MEANING	CONNECTORS	EXAMPLE
Contrast	although, though, even though, while, whereas	Although it is convenient, online study can feel lonely.
Reason	because, since, as	Prices rose because demand was high.
Purpose / result	so that, so ... that	Rules exist so that everyone stays safe.
Condition	if, unless, provided that	Unless we act now, the problem will grow.
Time	when, while, before, after, once	Once people retire, their income usually falls.

IELTS While and whereas are perfect for Task 2 comparisons: Some people prefer cars, **whereas** others rely on public transport.

Relative clauses & common mistakes

Relative clauses add detail to a noun **without starting a new sentence** — a fast, natural way to sound more advanced.

USE FOR	PRONOUN	EXAMPLE
People	who / that	Students who plan their time do better.
Things	which / that	A policy which ignores cost will fail.
Places	where	A city where rents are high loses young workers.
Possession	whose	Families whose income is low need support.

Use a relative clause to **combine** two short sentences: The city is crowded. It attracts tourists. → The city, **which** is crowded, still attracts tourists.

RULE **Commas matter.** No commas when the clause is **essential** (it defines which one): People **who** smoke risk their health. Use commas when it is **extra** information: My teacher, **who** is very strict, helped me.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

- ✗ Cities are growing, housing is limited.
- ✓ Cities are growing, **but** housing is limited.
Two sentences need a connector, not just a comma (comma splice).
- ✗ Although cities are growing.
- ✓ Although cities are growing, prices are rising.
A subordinate clause alone is a fragment — add a main clause.
- ✗ Although it rained, but we walked.
- ✓ Although it rained, we walked.
Don't use two connectors for one link — drop but.
- ✗ People which live in cities...
- ✓ People **who** live in cities...
Use who for people and which for things.

Band 5 → Band 7: join your ideas

Same idea, two bands. Notice how the Band 7 version **joins** the ideas with a connector or a clause instead of writing several short sentences.

BAND 5 Many people move to cities. They want jobs. Cities become crowded.



BAND 7 Many people move to cities **because** they want jobs, **which** makes urban areas increasingly crowded.

Reason (because) + relative clause (which) turn three simple sentences into one.

BAND 5 Technology is very useful. It can be dangerous too.



BAND 7 **Although** technology is extremely useful, it can also be dangerous.

One contrast connector (although) shows the relationship between the two ideas.

BAND 5 Online learning is convenient. Students can study at home.



BAND 7 Online learning is convenient, **as** it allows students to study at home.

As gives the reason and links the two clauses smoothly.

BAND 5 The government should build houses. Prices are high. People cannot buy homes.



BAND 7 **Since** prices are so high that many people cannot buy homes, the government should build more.

Since (reason) and so ... that (result) combine three ideas into one complex sentence.

TASK 1 Identify the sentence type

Write **S** (simple), **CD** (compound) or **CX** (complex) after each sentence.

1. The internet has changed how we work. _____
2. Because the roads were icy, schools closed early. _____
3. Renewable energy is clean, but it can be expensive. _____
4. Students who read widely tend to write better. _____
5. Many tourists visit the old town every summer. _____
6. The bus was late, so I missed the meeting. _____

TASK 2 Choose the right connector

Complete each sentence with the best connector from the bank. Use each one once.

although because which if whereas so that

1. _____ the city is expensive, many people still want to live there. _____
2. The council widened the road _____ traffic could flow more easily. _____
3. Electric cars are quiet, _____ petrol cars are noisy. _____
4. Recycling is important _____ it reduces waste. _____
5. We will miss the train _____ we do not leave now. _____
6. The new library, _____ opened last year, is always busy. _____

TASK 3 Join the sentences

Combine each pair into one **complex** sentence using the connector in brackets. More than one answer may be possible.

1. Cars cause pollution. Many cities are limiting them. **(because)** _____
2. The exam was difficult. Most students passed. **(although)** _____
3. She studied hard. She wanted a high score. **(because)** _____
4. The hotel is near the beach. It is very popular. **(which)** _____
5. People exercise regularly. They stay healthier. **(if)** _____

TASK 4 Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has one error — a comma splice, a fragment, or a double connector. Rewrite it correctly.

1. The weather was cold, we stayed at home. _____
2. Because the flight was delayed. We missed the connection. _____
3. Although the plan is expensive, but it is necessary. _____
4. Students which work part-time are often tired. _____
5. Tourism brings money, it also creates problems. _____

Answer key

TASK 1 · IDENTIFY THE SENTENCE TYPE

1 S 2 CX 3 CD 4 CX 5 S 6 CD

TASK 2 · CHOOSE THE RIGHT CONNECTOR

1 Although 2 so that 3 whereas 4 because 5 if 6 which

TASK 3 · JOIN THE SENTENCES

1. Because cars cause pollution, many cities are limiting them.
2. Although the exam was difficult, most students passed.
3. She studied hard because she wanted a high score.
4. The hotel, which is near the beach, is very popular.
5. If people exercise regularly, they stay healthier.

TASK 4 · FIND AND FIX THE MISTAKE

1. The weather was cold, **so** we stayed at home.
2. Because the flight was delayed, we missed the connection.
3. Although the plan is expensive, it is necessary. (remove "but")
4. Students **who** work part-time are often tired.
5. Tourism brings money, **but** it also creates problems.



Well done. Keep this guide open the next time you write a Task 2 essay — apply one rule at a time until it becomes automatic. More grammar and vocabulary packs at prepex.ai.