

## SYNTAX – OVERVIEW

What? The grammatical structure of sentences; the deliberate sentence structure the author chooses to make his or her desired point.

Why? Examined to show how it contributes to and enhances meaning and effect.

Remember...

Phrases = groups of related words w/o subject, predicate, or both

Clauses = groups of related words with subject and predicate

## ELEMENTS OF SYNTAX

### 1. Sentence length

- Staccato = one to two words, abrupt
- Telegraphic = shorter than five words
- Short = approx. 5-10 words
- Medium = approx. 15-20 words
- Long = 30 or more words

Consider: What variety of lengths is shown? How is it effective?

### 2. Number of sentences

### 3. Rhythm of sentences

### 4. Sentence beginnings – variety or pattern

### 5. Voice – active or passive?

### 6. Word order / arrangement of ideas– are words set out in a special way for a purpose or effect?

- Loose sentence (main point is at the beginning, “front loaded”)  
*Ex: We reached Edmonton that morning after a turbulent flight and some exciting experiences.*
- Periodic sentence (main point at the end, “end loaded”)  
*Ex: That morning, after a turbulent flight and some exciting experiences, we reached Edmonton.*
- Parallel structure
- Antithesis
- Natural order (subject before main verb)  
*Ex: Oranges grow in California.* • *Inverted order (verb before subject)*  
*Ex: In California grow oranges.*
- Interrupted sentence: subordinate clauses come in the middle, set off by dashes or commas  
*Ex: These had been her teachers, -- stern and wild ones, -- and they had made her strong....*

### 7. Sentence types

- Declarative = statements  
*Ex: The clock struck eight. She waited. Nobody came.*
- Interrogative = questions
- Imperative = commands, requests  
*Ex: Write to the local TV station. Try to convince others to take your side.*
- Exclamatory
- Simple sentences = 1 subject, 1 predicate  
*Ex: The price of gold rose. Stock prices may fall. Van Gogh painted The Starry Night.*

- Compound sentences = two or more independent clauses joined with coordinating conjunctions, transitional words/phrases, semicolons, or colons

*Ex: The saxophone does not belong to the brass family; in fact, it is a member of the woodwind family.*

*Ex: In the fall the war was always there, but we did not go to it any more. (Hemingway)*

- Complex sentences = one independent clause and one dependent clause

*Ex: After the town was evacuated, the hurricane began.*

*Ex: Town officials, who were very concerned, watched the storm.*

- Compound-complex = two or more independent clauses and at least one dependent clause

*Ex: When small foreign imports began dominating the US automobile industry, consumers were very responsive, but American auto workers were dismayed.*

- Fragments and run-ons