

TOP 30 ENGLISH SENTENCE EQUATIONS

30 reusable patterns for natural, confident writing

You do **not** have to invent English from scratch. Natural English is full of familiar structures into which you can insert your own ideas:

PATTERN + YOUR CONTENT = NATURAL ENGLISH

Think of **X, Y and Z as variables**. Replace them with whatever your topic requires.

CAUSE & EFFECT

1. X leads to Y.

Lack of sleep can lead to poor concentration.

Use it for:

causes → consequences

2. X can result in Y.

Poor planning can result in unnecessary stress.

A useful alternative to *lead to*.

3. X is largely due to Y.

The increase in prices is largely due to higher production costs.

Also:

mainly / partly / largely due to

4. One of the main reasons why X is that Y.

One of the main reasons why people shop online is that it saves time.

A superb all-purpose explanation structure.

5. X has a major impact on Y.

Social media has a major impact on the way we communicate.

Replace *major*:

positive / negative / considerable / lasting / limited

6. X makes it easier/harder for Y to Z.

Technology makes it easier for people to stay in touch.

High prices make it harder for young people to live independently.

A particularly useful English construction.

CONTRAST & CONCESSION

7. While X may be true, Y.

While social media may be useful, it can also become a distraction.

This means:

Yes, X — but remember Y.

8. Although X, Y.

Although the idea sounds attractive, it would be difficult to put into practice.

Simple, flexible and highly useful.

9. X may be Y, but that does not necessarily mean Z.

A product may be expensive, but that does not necessarily mean it is good.

Excellent for challenging simple assumptions.

10. X has its advantages, but it also has its drawbacks.

Working from home has its advantages, but it also has its drawbacks.

Almost any issue can be inserted into X.

QUALIFYING YOUR CLAIM

Good writers rarely claim that something is *always* or *never* true.

11. X does not necessarily mean Y.

Being busy does not necessarily mean being productive.

One of the most valuable structures in argumentative writing.

12. X tends to Y.

People tend to underestimate the importance of sleep.

Much safer than:

People always...

13. X is likely to Y.

The problem is likely to become more serious in the future.

Useful when you cannot claim certainty.

14. X depends largely on Y.

The success of the system depends largely on how it is used.

Also:

depends on whether...

depends on how...

depends on who...

15. What works for X may not work for Y.

What works for one student may not work for another.

A brilliant structure for avoiding overgeneralisation.

IDENTIFYING WHAT REALLY MATTERS

16. What matters is X.

What matters is how people use the technology.

Even better:

What matters most is X.

17. What matters is not X but Y.

What matters is not how much money you have but how you use it.

The **not X but Y** structure is enormously useful.

18. X is less about Y and more about Z.

Education is less about memorising facts and more about learning how to think.

A sophisticated structure with very simple grammar.

19. The real issue is not X but Y.

The real issue is not technology itself but how we use it.

Useful when you want to correct or deepen an argument.

20. The question is not whether X, but how/whether Y.

The question is not whether we should use artificial intelligence, but how we should use it.

This structure practically creates an argument for you.

PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS

21. The problem with X is that Y.

The problem with social media is that it can easily become a distraction.

One structure — thousands of possible sentences.

22. One way to X is to Y.

One way to reduce traffic is to improve public transport.

A perfect solution structure:

GOAL → METHOD

23. X prevents Y from Z-ing.

Lack of money prevents many people from travelling.

Notice the fixed grammar:

prevent + someone + from + -ing

24. The challenge is to X without Y-ing.

The challenge is to increase efficiency without reducing quality.

An exceptionally useful structure because many real problems involve **two competing goals**.

25. There is a balance to be struck between X and Y.

There is a balance to be struck between freedom and responsibility.

Excellent for mature argumentative writing.

CHANGE & DEVELOPMENT

26. X has changed the way Y.

Smartphones have changed the way we communicate.

Try:

the way we work
the way we learn
the way we shop
the way we travel
the way we consume news

27. X is becoming increasingly Y.

Online services are becoming increasingly important.

A useful structure for discussing trends.

EXAMPLES & PERSPECTIVE

28. A good example of X is Y.

A good example of renewable energy is solar power.

Simple English is often the best English.

29. When it comes to X, Y.

When it comes to education, motivation matters enormously.

Extremely flexible:

When it comes to **money**, ...

When it comes to **social media**, ...

When it comes to **young people**, ...

When it comes to **the environment**, ...

THE SUPER-EQUATION

30. X allows Y to Z.

Technology allows people to work from almost anywhere.

This structure is everywhere in English:

X allows + someone + to + verb

Compare:

The internet allows students to access information quickly.

Public transport allows people to travel without a car.

Flexible working hours allow employees to organise their day more freely.

THE 10 TO LEARN FIRST

If 30 still seems too many, start with these:

1.

X leads to Y.

2.

X makes it easier/harder for Y to Z.

3.

While X may be true, Y.

4.

X does not necessarily mean Y.

5.

What works for X may not work for Y.

6.

The problem with X is that Y.

7.

One way to X is to Y.

8.

What matters is not X but Y.

9.

The challenge is to X without Y-ing.

10.

X has changed the way Y.

These ten alone can do an astonishing amount of work.

DON'T MEMORISE THE SENTENCE — MEMORISE THE MACHINE

Consider:

The problem with X is that Y.

You could write:

The problem with cars is that they take up a great deal of space.

The problem with social media is that it can be addictive.

The problem with strict rules is that they do not take individual circumstances into account.

The problem with online shopping is that customers cannot see the product before buying it.

The meaning changes completely.

The **English** does not.

That is the point.

ENGLISH IS NOT LEGO WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS

A learner sometimes approaches writing as if every sentence had to be assembled from individual words:

word + word + word + word + word...

That places an enormous burden on the writer.

A better approach is:

ready-made structure + original content

So instead of thinking:

How on earth do I say this in English?

think:

What am I trying to do?

Do I want to...

show cause?

X leads to Y.

challenge an assumption?

X does not necessarily mean Y.

acknowledge another viewpoint?

While X may be true, Y.

identify a problem?

The problem with X is that Y.

suggest a solution?

One way to X is to Y.

identify the real issue?

What matters is not X but Y.

describe two competing goals?

The challenge is to X without Y-ing.

Once you recognise the job the sentence needs to do, you can reach for a structure that already exists in English.

Your ideas can be original.

Your grammar does not have to be.