Sentence Patterns

Following are the five basic sentence patterns. If you are having problems constructing a sentence, make sure that it follows one of these patterns. This information is from Longman English Grammar by L.G. Alexander.

1. Subject + Verb

   Note: These verbs are intransitive (do not take direct objects).
   Examples: My head aches.
              He cried.

2. Subject + Verb + Complement

   Note: The verbs are “linking” verbs (be, appear, become, look, seem, sound, taste). Complements are nouns, pronouns and phrases which complete the meanings of verbs.
   Examples: Frank is clever. (adjective)
             It’s mine. (pronoun)
             The meeting is here. (adverb of place or time)
             Alice is like her father. (prepositional phrase)

3. Subject + Verb + Direct Object

   Note: These verbs are transitive (take direct objects).
   Examples: We parked the car. (noun)
             We forgave her. (pronoun)
             I want to leave. (infinitive)
             I enjoy reading. (gerund)

4. Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object

   Note: The indirect object can be reversed with the direct object (see examples). Some verbs require “to” in this construction (e.g. I showed the photo to him.) and some verbs require “for” in this construction (e.g. He brought a present for Jamie.).
   Examples: I gave Mike the keys. (I gave the keys to Mike.)
             He showed me the photos. (He showed the photos to me.)

5. Subject + Verb + Object + Complement

   Note: The complement is usually a noun, though after some verbs it can be an adjective or a noun (e.g. They called him foolish/a fool.).
   Examples: They appointed him chairman. (noun complement)
             They made Sam president. (noun complement)
             Loud music drives me crazy. (adjective complement)
             I find math difficult. (adjective complement)