

clauses

At painful times, when composition is impossible and reading is not enough, grammars and dictionaries are excellent for distraction.

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ENGLISH POET

Sometimes they're a sentence, and sometimes they're not. Clauses, like phrases, add detail and information to your sentences. In this lesson, you will see how and why clauses are necessary elements within a piece of work.

UNLIKE A PHRASE, a **clause** is a group of words that has its own subject and verb. This allows some clauses to be considered sentences. Others, despite the fact that they have their own subject and verb, are not sentences because they don't express a complete thought. There are three kinds of clauses: independent, subordinate, and relative. Let's look at them more closely.

INDEPENDENT CLAUSES

The **independent clause**, or **main clause**, can stand alone as a simple sentence, because it not only has the two main components of a sentence, a simple subject and a simple predicate, but it also expresses a complete thought.

S V
Henry walked home from school.

S V
It began to rain.

Two or more clauses can be put together, with the help of semicolons or coordinating conjunctions (*and, or, for, nor, but, yet, and so*), to form a longer sentence.

Henry walked home from school; it began to rain.

Henry walked home from school *and* it began to rain.

Henry walked home from school *and* it began to rain, *but* luckily he had an umbrella stashed in his book bag; he is always prepared.

We will learn more about combining clauses to make longer sentences in Lesson 14.

SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

A **subordinate clause**, also referred to as a **dependent clause**, cannot stand alone as a simple sentence, even though it contains a subject and a verb. Such clauses must be connected with an independent clause to help them do their job.

Although ^S Cara ^V was absent from school for three days, ^S she ^V did well on her quiz.
 [subordinate] + [independent]

Dean's mom ^S cooked dinner ^V while ^S he ^V worked on his science project.
 [independent] + [subordinate]

Even though they may look similar to independent clauses, subordinate clauses are different because they must begin with either a **subordinating conjunction** or a **relative pronoun**. The following charts give some examples.

COMMON SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

after	although	as if	as long as	as much as
as soon as	because	before	even if	even though
if	in order that	now that	provided that	since
so	so long as	though	unless	until
when	whenever	whereas	whether	while
where				
Examples: <i>after</i> she left <i>so long as</i> I am the leader <i>whether</i> you like it or not				

RELATIVE PRONOUNS

that	which	whichever
who	whoever	whose
whosever	whom	whomever
Examples: <i>whose</i> mom is so nice <i>which</i> made him grouchy <i>whichever</i> comes first		

TIP: When you begin a sentence with a subordinate clause, you have to put a comma after it.

Whether I like it or not, Mom says I must wear my helmet when I skateboard.

However, when you end a sentence with one, you don't.

Mom says I must wear my helmet when I skateboard whether I like it or not.

RELATIVE CLAUSES

A **relative clause** is one that begins with a relative pronoun (see the preceding chart). In a sentence, a relative clause acts like an adjective by giving more information about the subject of the sentence. Even though relative clauses have their own subject and verb, though, they cannot stand alone as a sentence because they don't express a complete thought. For example:

S
S
V
V
V

Mom's apple pie recipe that won in last week's county fair was published in the local newspaper.

that won in last week's county fair answers *which one?* about the noun *recipe*.

S
S
V
V
V

Austin, who skis well, will compete for a state title this year.

who skis well answers *which one?* about the proper noun *Austin*.

PRACTICE: INDEPENDENT AND SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

Determine whether the boldfaced group of words is an independent, a subordinate, or a relative clause. You may check your answers with the key at the end of the lesson.

1. **Jason took a nap** before he left for his friend's house.
2. You can keep your privileges **as long as we continue to see progress**.
3. Hannah wasn't feeling well, **which Dad noticed immediately**.
4. **Although you may disagree**, I still say Sheila is the best person for the job.
5. There would be less tension between them **if they could just see eye to eye**.
6. **I'm bringing my homework along** even though we don't plan to stay long.
7. Golam, **whom I've never met before**, seemed like a pretty nice guy.
8. **In order that we may be respectful of the presenters**, please turn off your cell phones.
9. I knew this was going to be an exciting game **when Andrew took his first swing**.
10. Margaret, **whose earrings I borrowed last week**, told her dad that she was tired and wanted to go home.
11. **Before you go**, would you please be sure to clean up the mess you make?
12. **It seemed like only yesterday** that I was here playing tag with my friends Julie and Laurie.
13. **Whichever cookie you decide on**, I assure you it will be absolutely delicious.