

## AN INTRODUCTION TO CLAUSES

Sentences can be classified either in terms of the kinds of clauses they contain (grammatically) or in terms of their purpose (rhetorically). Becoming aware of types of sentences allows one to vary his/her writing style to suit one's audience, content, and purpose. One will find, too, that sentence variety holds a reader's interest. How boring it is to read all simple sentences! In contrast, after many longer sentences, a punchy short sentence adds force to a key point (Rosa and Eschholz 65).

### Classification by Clause Structure

<i>A simple sentence</i>	consists of one main clause and no subordinate clauses.
<i>A compound sentence</i>	consists of two or more main clauses and no subordinate clauses. The main clauses may be joined by a coordinating conjunction ( <i>and, but, or, for, nor, so, or yet</i> ) and a comma; by a semicolon; by a semicolon and a transitional word ( <i>however, nevertheless, therefore</i> ); or by a correlative con-junction such as <i>either/or, both/and..</i>
<i>A complex sentence</i>	consists of one main clause and one or more subordinate clauses.
<i>A compound-complex sentence</i>	consists of two or more main clauses and at least one subordinate clause.

### Types of Clauses

Independent Clause	(Can stand alone as a complete sentence)
Dependent Clause	(A subordinate clause: cannot stand alone as a sentence because it is an incomplete thought)
Noun Clause	(A dependent clause that begins with a subordinator that connects the clause to the main clause)
Adjective Clause	(A dependent clause: modifies a noun or a pronoun)
Adverb Clause	(A dependent clause: modifies a verb, adjective, another adverb, or a sentence)
Essential Clause	(Restrictive or necessary clause)
Nonessential Clause	(Nonrestrictive or unnecessary clause)

## CLAUSES

The sentence is the basic unit of communication in English. **Clauses** and **phrases** are the sub-units of a sentence.

An English sentence has two parts: **subject** and **predicate**. The subject identifies the topic of the sentence. The **predicate** comments on the topic. The **subject** must include a noun or a phrase or clause acting as a noun. The **predicate** must include a verb.

A **CLAUSE** is a group of words containing a **SUBJECT** and a **PREDICATE**. **CLAUSES** that can stand alone are called **INDEPENDENT CLAUSES**; **CLAUSES** that do not express a complete thought and cannot stand alone are called **DEPENDENT CLAUSES**.

### INDEPENDENT CLAUSES (the simple sentence)

An independent clause is another name for a simple sentence. An independent clause has a subject and a verb, expresses a complete thought, and can stand alone as a complete sentence because it doesn't depend on anything else to complete the thought.

Examples:

1. *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemmings* lived in Paris for a time.

2. *Martha Jackson* was a remarkable woman.

3. *Socrates* drank hemlock and died.

4. The *cat* clawed its way to the top of the tree.

### COMMAS JOIN INDEPENDENT CLAUSES

Independent clauses can be written as individual sentences, or they can be joined as one sentence. One way to join them is by using a comma and coordinating conjunction after the first independent clause. Two or more independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, for, nor, yet, or so*) make up a compound sentence.

Examples:

1. Dan wrote a research paper on motivation. He submitted it for publication. **(Two independent clauses.)**

2. Dan wrote a research paper on motivation, and he submitted it for publication. **(Compound sentence. The same two independent clauses are joined by a comma and the coordinating conjunction *and*.)**



## NOUN CLAUSES

A noun clause is a dependent clause. A noun clause can be a subject, a direct or indirect object, or an object of a preposition. Noun clauses can begin with "wh- question" words (what, which, when, where, who, whom) and question words like (how, if, that).

Examples:

	Noun	Noun Clause
Subject	1. His <b>whereabouts</b> are unknown.	1. <b>Where he lives</b> is unknown.
Direct Object	2. I don't know <b>that man</b> .	2. I don't know <b>who he is</b> .
Indirect Object	3. The security officer gave <b>the students</b> the key.	3. The security officer gave <b>whoever wanted it the key</b> .
Object of Preposition	4. He isn't interested in <b>geometry</b> .	4. He isn't interested in <b>what the class is studying</b> .

A noun clause begins with a subordinator that connects the clause to the main clause. The following is a list of subordinators used to introduce noun clauses:

how	where	what, whatever	whose, whomever
that	whether, if	who, whoever	which, whichever
when	why	whom, whomever	

**Examples:**

*Note: The subordinator is in italics. The noun clause including the verb and any helping verb is underlined.*

The laboratory aide reported *that* all the students had completed the experiment.

The students asked *when* the psychology reports were due.

Mrs. Peterson asked *whether* the secretaries had ordered the office supplies yet.

**Practice Exercise:** In each blank space, write a noun clause to complete the sentence. Be careful that your noun clause is correctly constructed and that it makes sense.

1. After the movie, the sisters asked their father \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. The customer wondered \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Sarah's instructor explained that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. During the history lesson, Sarah wondered \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. I said \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### ADJECTIVE CLAUSES (who/which/that clauses)

An adjective clause is a dependent clause. An adjective clause modifies a noun or a pronoun. An adjective clause begins with *who*, *whom*, *which*, *that*, *whose*, *when*, *where*, *why* and follows the word it modifies.

*Examples:*

David, **who has been with the company five years**, is our new director.  
noun                      adjective clause

The time **when our plane arrives** is 4:00 p.m.  
noun                      adjective clause

The house **where Lincoln lives as a young man** was in Springfield, Illinois.  
noun                      adjective clause

The diamond ring **which the thief stole** was worth a million dollars.  
adjective      noun      adjective clause

An adjective clause, like an adverb clause, begins with a **subordinator**. The subordinator connects the adjective clause to the word in the main clause it modifies: it stands for this word.

**Practice Exercise: *Underline the adjective clause in sentences and circle the nouns they modify.***

1. The scientists discussed the issues that the conference had raised.
2. The company rejected the parts whose design was defective.
3. We found the bird whose wing had been damaged.
4. The children whom you asked about live next door.
5. Senator Jackson, who was up for re-election, was for the bill.
6. The desserts that they serve are really good.
7. The neighborhood where I live is changing a lot.

**ADVERB CLAUSES (because/if/when clauses)**

An adverb clause is a dependent clause. An adverb clause modifies a verb, an adjective, another adverb, or a sentence.

Adverb clauses always begin with a subordinator. The subordinator is a connecting word which explains the relationship between the adverb clause and main clause. It tells the reader what kind of information is added by the adverb clause. The following subordinators are often used to begin adverb clauses:

after	Before	Though	whatever
although	even it	Unless	whenever
as	even though	Until	wherever
as if	as far as	as soon as	whether
because	Since	as well as	while

An adverb clause can answer any of the following questions: **When? Where? How? To what degree?** and **Under what condition?**

***Examples of adverb clauses answering a question:***

Cinderella lost her shoe **after the clock struck twelve**. (when did she lose her shoe?)  
(after...twelve)

Mary hid the key **where no one could find it**. (where did she hide it?)

My sister drove so fast **that she got a ticket**. (how fast did she drive?)

The bush is **as high as the fence**. (to what degree?)

The fire will burn the forest **unless it rains**. (under what condition?).

Note: Because the subordinator is always the first word of an adverb clause, you can identify the adverb clause very easily:

...First: Find the subordinator.

...Second: Identify the words that provide the kind of information signaled by the subordinator.

...Third: Remember, the whole adverb clause may often be placed before or after the main clause.

...Fourth: After you identify the adverb clause or clauses, what remains in the complex sentence will be the main clause.

**Examples:** *Each subordinator is bold-faced, and the whole adverb clause is underlined.*

1. Joanne had to develop many money-management skills **when** she served as treasurer of her senior class.

2. **As** Mike worked on his research project for his English class, he learned to gather information from sources on the Internet.

Practice Exercise: *In each of the following complex sentences, **underline** the whole adverb clause and **circle** the subordinator.*

1. The children looked as if they had been playing in a dirt mound.

2. Mary went shopping while Barbara was working.

3. My oldest brother has always given me help whenever I needed it.

4. The other children did not play their instruments as well as Tony did.

5. After he had tried every other way to raise his grades, John decided to study.

6. Peggy missed her appointment because she was in a car accident.

7. Although many of the booths close as early as 7:00 p.m., Marilyn kept hers both open until 8:00 p.m.

## ESSENTIAL AND NONESSENTIAL CLAUSES

An **essential clause** or **phrase** (also called a *restrictive*, or *necessary* clause or phrase) appears after a noun and is essential in the sentence to complete the meaning. An essential clause or phrase cannot be moved to another sentence or omitted because the meaning of the sentence would change.

**Note: Essential clauses and phrases are not set off by commas. Clauses starting with *that* are almost always essential.**

Examples: Compare the meaning of the following two sentences with and without the clause after the noun *people*:

People who can speak more than one language are multilingual.

People are multilingual.

Using the *that* clause versus taking the *that* clause out:

Please repair all the windows **that are broken**.

Please repair all the windows. (the meaning of the sentence changes).

A **nonessential clause** or **phrase** (also called a *nonrestrictive* or *unnecessary* clause or phrase) adds extra information but can be removed from a sentence without disturbing the meaning. The information can be put in another sentence.

**Examples: Compare the following two sentences to see if the primary meaning of the sentence remains the same even after the clause is removed:**

My cousin Michael, **who lives in New York**, is coming for a visit over Thanksgiving vacation.

My cousin Michael is coming for a visit over Thanksgiving vacation.

The *who* clause is nonessential because it adds information about where Jim lives but is not necessary.

*Note: A pair of commas is necessary when nonessential clauses and phrases appear within a sentence. Only one comma is needed when non-essential clauses and phrases appear at the end of a sentence.*

**Examples:**

The computer, **a revolutionary advance in communication technology**, has made typewriters obsolete. (clause appears in the middle of the sentence)

Consumers are now spending millions of dollars on computers, **a revolutionary advance in communication technology**. (clause appears at the end of the sentence)

Practice Exercise: *Some of these sentences contain essential clauses; others contain nonessential clauses. In the blank space before each sentence:*

*write **E** if the clause is **essential***

*write **N** for **nonessential**.*

Then, underline each clause, and insert **commas** where needed.

1. Joanne is wearing the dress that she received for Christmas.
2. People who are careless do not make good drivers.
3. The book that I have read for this course is a nonfiction focus on the Vietnam War.
4. Professor Thompson who is my biology teacher is a great motivator.
5. All the tickets that had been sold for the football game were recalled.
6. My uncle who works at the Post Office lives in Omaha, Nebraska.
7. The city which fascinates me most is New York City.
8. Tom Marshall who was offered scholarships to two colleges will enroll at The University of Kansas.
9. On my return home I discovered my neighbor had moved away.

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## CLAUSES/ More Practice

### REVIEW: NOUN CLAUSES

#### Identifying and Completing Noun Clauses

I. In the following sentences, underline the whole noun clause and draw a circle around the subordinator.

**Examples:** *Yesterday, my biology instructor said that she would give a test on Monday.  
I inquired if I could take the test a day early.*

1. He then asked why I would miss Monday's class.
2. I explained that I had to work all day Monday.
3. I said that I work at a department store in the mall four nights a week.
4. He wondered why I would be missing his afternoon class.
5. I told him that my manager was going on vacation on Monday.
6. My manager had promised a raise to whoever would work his shift on Monday.
7. My manager said that he works from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
8. I decided that I needed this raise too badly to turn down his offer.
9. I told my instructor why I was sorry about missing the class.
10. Fortunately, he explained how I could take the test on Tuesday.

II. Complete each noun clause by writing an appropriate subordinator in each of the blank spaces.

**Example:** *Yesterday, my supervisor asked me whether I would like to learn to use the new word processor.*

1. She asked \_\_\_\_\_ I could attend several training sessions.
2. I replied \_\_\_\_\_ I had free time on Wednesday afternoons.

3. She then asked \_\_\_\_\_ I would like a computer at my desk.
4. I answered \_\_\_\_\_ a computer would make my secretarial job much easier.
5. I wondered \_\_\_\_\_ I had been chosen to receive the **new** equipment.

### **Writing Noun Clauses**

In each blank space, write a noun clause to complete the sentence. Be sure that your noun clause is correctly constructed and that it makes sense.

**Examples:** The salesperson asked me if I needed any help.  
I told Mary that I was doing fairly well on my own.

1. I asked my math instructor \_\_\_\_\_
2. The instructor told me \_\_\_\_\_
3. John asked his brother \_\_\_\_\_
4. John's brother replied \_\_\_\_\_
5. The customer asked the waitress \_\_\_\_\_
6. The waitress answered \_\_\_\_\_
7. After the movie, the twins asked their mother \_\_\_\_\_
8. Their mother told them \_\_\_\_\_
9. I asked my house painter \_\_\_\_\_
10. He told me \_\_\_\_\_

### **REVIEW: ADJECTIVE CLAUSES Identifying Adjective Clauses**

I. Underline the adjective clause in each of the following complex sentences. Circle the noun or pronoun which the adjective clause modifies.

*Examples:*

Employers sometimes pass over job applicants who have no prior experience.

Job advertisements that require previous experience may discourage job applicants.

1. Students should begin early to decide on a course of study which they wish to follow.
2. Students who have little work experience might consider volunteering for work in their chosen field.
3. While enrolled in college, students may also apply for part-time or summer jobs in their chosen fields to gain experience.
4. Nonprofit organizations use volunteers whom they train to work in a wide variety of employment areas.
5. Volunteer work that directly identifies with an applicant's chosen field often counts as work experience.
6. Internships which provide work experience can be very beneficial to college students.

## Identifying Subjects, Adjective Clauses, and Verbs

II. Circle the subject, underline the adjective clause, and place a V above the verb.

### *Examples:*

A parent who returns to school often leaves his/her child with relatives during school hours.

The instructions which were provided with the television were not clear.

1. The tutors who left for a meeting are the only ones who know the rules on commas.
2. Mary's niece who is saving money for a trip to Los Angeles works every night.
3. Michael's youngest brother who is taking our grandparents to New York has never flown before.
4. The computer I bought last week has been sent out for an adjustment.
5. The two retail stores in our area that lost money this year will lay off employees in December.
6. Each student who graduated with a social services degree this year found employment in a related field.
7. Many of the older students must divide their time between school, home, and work.
8. Students who plan to graduate next spring should schedule an appointment with a school counselor to review employment possibilities in his/her chosen field.
9. A policeman who was observing shoppers at the Mall arrested a teenage girl for shoplifting.

## Punctuating Sentences with Adjective Clauses

III. Underline the adjective clause in each of the following sentences. Write NE for "nonessential" and E for "essential" Then, set off each "nonessential" clause with commas. (Reminder: Essential clauses and phrases are not set off by commas. Clauses starting with that are almost always essential).

NE

Examples: My cousin Andrea, who has worked as a nurse for fifteen years, has enrolled in a physician's assistant program.

E

The set of tires that I bought three years ago will probably last one more season.

Punctuating Sentences with Adjective Clauses (continued):

1. The trip which Jonathan is planning with his wife will take them around the world.
2. Jonathan's trip will begin in New York City and end in Los Angeles.
3. The person whose car I borrowed mistakenly reported it missing.
4. Alex who is teaching at Penn Valley Community College is leaving to accept a teaching position on the East Coast.
5. Alex who moved from Kansas City, Missouri to Boston, Massachusetts last year is teaching at a four-year university.
6. The New Year's Eve party which Sally had carefully planned was a definite success.
7. The tacos which are served every Friday in the school cafeteria taste like cardboard.
8. My friend Annabelle Lee who has been a doctor for thirty years is retiring next year.
9. Angry at his rude behavior John's mother ordered him to leave the restaurant.
10. The research paper which Richard is typing for his sister has four charts and five graphs.
11. The advisory board composed of parents of middle school children meets every Monday evening.
12. The fireplace gas logs that we had installed last winter are in need of repair.

## REVIEW: ADVERB CLAUSES

**Reminder:** An adverb clause always begins with a subordinator. The subordinator is a connecting word which explains the relationship between the adverb clause and the main clause; it tells the reader what kind of information is added by the adverb clause.

### Identifying Adverb Clauses

I. In each of the following sentences, underline the whole adverb clause and circle the subordinator.

*Example:*

*Some students are taking Comp I classes on Saturday because they work full-time during the week.*

1. Joanne missed the first two acts of the play because she was in an automobile accident.
2. My aunt listened quietly as my cousin explained the reasons for her absence.
3. Thomas swam as if he had a shark right behind him!
4. While Mark was finishing an internship at the laboratory, Martha was completing a master's degree in psychology.
5. After Timothy had worked as a volunteer firefighter for three years, he chose to return to school to study fire prevention.
6. Jim has not seen his brothers and sisters since he left home in 1997.
7. The children looked as if they had been playing in a strawberry patch.
8. The two little puppies damaged the furniture whenever they were left alone.
9. Whenever Gary comes to visit his parents on the ranch, his father tries to put him to work in the stables.

## Using Subordinators to Build Adverb Clauses

II. In each blank space, write a subordinator that will connect the main clause and the adverb clause in a meaningful way. Note that some adverb clauses are before and others are after the main clause.

*Examples: The coach will not leave until the entire team arrives.*

*Dr. Tobias had pursued his investigation as far as he could.*

1. Please return my lawnmower \_\_\_\_\_ you have finished with it.
2. He will practice \_\_\_\_\_ it takes to perfect his skills.
3. No one else plays the trumpet \_\_\_\_\_ he does.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ as Phillip returned for a follow-up interview, he was much more confident of his chances to be selected.
5. Joan and Charles celebrated \_\_\_\_\_ they had both been nominated to the honor society.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ she did not realize it at first, Sarah learned a valuable lesson in her first class at K-State.
7. George had not visited Uncle Phil \_\_\_\_\_ he was taken to the Emergency Room at St. Luke's.
8. Stephen is much taller \_\_\_\_\_ I am.
9. The small boy refused to go with the security guard \_\_\_\_\_ the guard spoke to his mother.
10. Bo will never finish on time \_\_\_\_\_ he begins painting his room immediately.