



# WRITING CENTER

## Clauses

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**Clauses** are the foundational structure of every sentence. All clauses contain a subject and a verb and can either be independent or dependent.

### TYPES OF CLAUSES

Independent clause	Can stand alone as a complete sentence.
Dependent (or subordinate) clause	Cannot stand alone as a sentence because it is an incomplete thought. It often begins with a subordinator such as <b>although, because, when, unless</b> , etc.

### SENTENCE CLASSIFICATION BY CLAUSE STRUCTURE

Simple sentence	One main clause and no dependent clauses.
Compound sentence	Two or more main clauses and no dependent clauses. The main clauses may be joined by a coordinating conjunction ( <b>and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet</b> ) and a comma; by a semicolon; by a semicolon and a transitional word ( <b>however, nevertheless, therefore</b> ); or by a correlative conjunction such as <b>both. . .and, or either. . . or</b> .
Complex sentence	One main clause and one or more dependent clauses.
Compound-complex sentence	Two or more main clauses and at least one dependent clause.



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### INDEPENDENT CLAUSES (THE SIMPLE SENTENCE)

**Note:** In the examples below:

- The subject is **bold**.
- The verb is underlined.
- Dependent clauses are *italicized*.

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; it doesn't depend on anything else to complete the thought.

**Examples:** **Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemmings** lived in Paris.

**Martha Jackson** was a remarkable woman.

**Socrates** drank hemlock and died.

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

### COMMAS JOINING INDEPENDENT CLAUSES

Independent clauses can be written as individual sentences, or they can be joined to make a single 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:** Dan wrote a research paper on motivation. He submitted it for publication. (*Two independent clauses.*)

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

**Note:** Be careful that what follows the word **and** (or any other coordinating conjunction) is an independent clause. If not, then do not use a comma.

**Example:** Dan wrote a research paper and submitted it for publication. (*No comma is needed because **submitted it for publication** is not an independent clause; it does not have its own subject*).



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### DEPENDENT CLAUSES

A **dependent clause** has a subject and a verb but cannot stand alone grammatically. A dependent clause is dependent because its connecting word (**because, if, so, which, that,** etc.) links it to an independent clause.

A dependent clause can function as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

**Examples:** NOUN: I know *that wheat grows in Kansas*.

ADJECTIVE: The car *which rolled over the cliff* was a pink Cadillac.

ADVERB: He retired early *because he had made so much money*.

### PRACTICE

**Practice Exercise One:** Insert commas where necessary in these sentences and circle them. Identify the coordinating conjunction and write it in the space on the right. If a sentence is correct, write "OK."

1. He enjoyed being a juror and he'd be happy to serve again if asked.
2. We can leave here about 9:00 a.m. or we can leave after lunch.
3. Marshall asked for an application for he wanted to apply for the job.
4. JoAnn left the building but she will return in two hours.


**Practice Exercise Two:** Underline the dependent clause in these sentences.

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 looked as if they had been playing in a dirt mound.
5. Mary went shopping while Barbara was working.
6. Peggy missed her appointment because she was in a car accident