

HOW TO RECOGNIZE CLAUSES

Independent Clauses and Dependent Clauses (Adjective, Adverb, Noun Clauses)

Independent clauses (Main clauses)	Dependent clauses (subordinate clauses)
A group of words with a subject, verb, and a complete thought	A group of words containing a subject and verb, but which does not have a complete thought and which acts as a part of speech (adjective, adverb, noun) within a larger sentence
Can stand alone as a sentence	Cannot stand alone as a sentence (doesn't have a complete thought) Must be attached to at least one main clause
Found in all types of sentences—simple, compound, complex, compound/complex	Found only in complex and compound/complex sentences

Dependent clauses

Adjective clause

Function	Modifies noun or pronoun (answers <i>which one? what kind?</i>)
Location	Usually follows the noun or pronoun modified
Begins with	<p>Relative pronouns—who, whom, whose, which, that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signals that the clause is dependent • Relates the adjective clause to the word it modifies in another clause • Functions as a pronoun to replace its antecedent which is the word the clause modifies in the main clause • If non-possessive, it also functions as a subject or an object within the adjective clause; Sometimes the adjective clause begins with a preposition making the pronoun an OP within the clause • <i>Whose</i> functions as a possessive determiner within the adjective clause • <i>That</i> is occasionally “understood” when it functions as the DO or OP in the adjective clause <p>Relative adverbs—when, where, why</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signals that the clause is dependent • Relates the adjective clause to the word that the adjective clause modifies in another clause <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An adjective clause beginning with when modifies a time noun, such as <i>day</i> or <i>era</i>. 2. An adjective clause beginning with where modifies a place noun, such as <i>California</i> or <i>house</i>. 3. An adjective clause beginning with why modifies a cause noun, such as <i>reason</i> or <i>cause</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functions as an adverb to modify the verb in the adjective clause itself
Punctuation rules	<p>Essential/nonessential rule:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If the clause contains information which is needed to identify the noun or pronoun modified, it is essential—it does not need commas. (<i>“that clauses are always essential”</i>) 2. If the clause contains extra information (it can be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence), it is nonessential—it needs a comma before and after (<i>Adj clauses following proper nouns are nearly always nonessential</i>)

Examples: (Adjective clause is underlined; word modified is in bold)

1. I know a **girl** who sings in the choir. (Which girl?)
2. The **judge**, who was angered by the outburst, slammed her gavel down to restore order in the courtroom. (Which judge?)
3. The **park** where we used to play as children is now the site of a shopping center. (Which park?)
4. My journalism **teacher**, whose opinion I respect, told me my article was good. (Which teacher?)
5. **Plays** he directed won many awards. (Which plays?)
6. In our town Dr. May is the only **doctor** who still makes house calls. (What kind of doctor?)

Adverb clause

Function	Modifies the verb (answers <i>when? where? how? why? under what condition?</i>)	Modifies adjectives or adverbs in a comparison (answers <i>to what extent?</i>)
Location	Beginning of sentence, near verb of main clause, or at the end of the sentence	Follows the word it modifies
Special info	<p>Elliptical clauses possible—some words in the clause can be “understood”</p> <p><u>Although [it was] common</u>, polyester was not the only fabric of choice in the 1970s.</p> <p><u>While [she was] dismounting from the uneven bars</u>, the gymnast Olga Korbut shocked the judges at the 1972 Olympics by completing a backwards somersault.</p> <p>At the time, the backward somersault was considered more dangerous than other moves [were dangerous].</p> <p>She is certainly more courageous than I [am].</p> <p>The teacher was happier with me <u>than [she was with] him</u>.</p>	
Begins with	<p>Subordinating conjunctions</p> <p><u>Time</u>—<i>when, while, as, before, after, since, now that, once, until, till, whenever</i></p> <p><u>Place</u>—<i>where, wherever</i></p> <p><u>Cause</u>—<i>because, since, as, inasmuch as</i></p> <p><u>Condition</u>—<i>if, on condition of, provided that, unless</i></p> <p><u>Contrast</u>—<i>whereas, while</i></p> <p><u>Manner</u>—<i>as, as if, as though, however</i></p> <p><u>Purpose</u>—<i>so that, so, that, in order that, lest</i></p> <p><u>Concession</u>—<i>although, even though, thought, even if</i></p> <p><u>Comparison and degree</u>—<i>than, as . . . as, so . . . as</i></p> <p><u>Result</u>—<i>so that, so . . . that, such . . . that</i></p> <p>Indefinite relative pronouns ending with <i>ever</i>—<i>whoever, whatever, etc.</i></p>	
Punctuation rules	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductory adverb clauses must be followed by a comma 2. Adverb clauses which interrupt the main clause will be set off with a comma before and a comma after 3. Adverb clauses at the end of the sentence do not need a comma 	

Examples (Adverb clause is underlined; word modified is in bold)

1. After the storm cleared, the flight **took off**. (When?)
2. You **will learn** to speak Spanish if you practice. (Under what condition?)
3. Sarah **spun** around as if she were an ice skater. (How?)
4. When we reached the top of the mountain, we **felt** tired but proud. (When?)
5. The little girl **looked** upset because her dog was lost. (Why?)
6. Alex **waxed** the car until it looked brand new. (When?)
7. I **dropped** my wallet as I was crossing the street. (When?)
8. Unless it rains, Jennifer **will go** on the retreat. (Under what condition?)
9. He is more **talkative** than I am. (To what extent?)
10. The teacher was **happier** with me than him. (To what extent?)

Noun clause

Function	Can perform any noun function in the main clause—subject, PN, DO, IO, OP, APP
Location	Can be anywhere in the sentence
Begins with	Subordinating conjunctions— <i>that</i> (occasionally omitted), <i>whether</i> (indicated a choice) Indefinite relative pronouns— <i>whoever, whomever, whosever, whichever, whatever</i> Indefinite relative adverbs— <i>when, where, why, how</i>
Punctuation rules	No special punctuation rules except that appositives would be set off by commas
Special info	Can be replaced by the pronouns <i>someone</i> or <i>something</i>

Examples

1. When we arrived at the hotel, we discovered that our reservation had been canceled. (DO)
2. Put the channel on whatever you prefer. (OP)
3. Whatever you choose will be a fine gift. (S)
4. The scientist predicted how the chemicals might react. (DO)
5. I will support whatever decision you make. (DO)
6. He has not decided whether he will go to college. (DO)
7. Please tell me when America's speed limit was fifty-five miles per hour. (DO)
8. Where the world's tallest building stands was the prize-winning question. (S)
9. Agnes explained how supermarket bar codes work. (DO)

Sentence structure based on clauses

Simple sentence = one main clause

The library was empty and quiet.

The change jingled loudly in my pocket.

John and Mary went on a date.

The teacher walked around the room and picked up the trash on the floor.

Compound sentence = two or more main clauses

Jim didn't take good notes, **but** Mary helped him study for the test.

A red car pulled up to the house, **and** a girl climbed out.

We helped our neighbors rake leaves; they helped us wash windows.

I cheered loudly for my team; **however**, I really didn't expect a victory.

Complex sentence = one main clause + at least one dependent clause

[As we neared the hot-air balloon festival], the sky looked like a fairyland.

Frederick Douglass, [who fought to end slavery], was a leader in the abolitionist movement.

I got in trouble today [because my cell phone rang during class].

Compound/complex sentence = two or more main clauses + at least one dependent clause

[When we went to the opera], we saw Luciano Pavarotti, **but** we didn't get to see Placido Domingo.

[Since no one had a question for the speaker], the lecture ended early, **and** we went out for hamburgers.

I threw the Frisbee [as far as I could], **and** the dog finally caught it [as it drifted into the neighbor's yard].

HINT—When called upon to classify a sentence based on its clausal structure, look for the **comma + conjunction** or the **semicolon alone** or the **semicolon + conjunctive adverb + comma**. If you find that construction, you must then choose between compound and compound/complex; if you do not find that construction, choose between simple and complex.