

The Clause

What is a clause?

- A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb. There are two types of clauses: Dependent and independent.

1. Independent Clause: It expresses a complete thought and has a subject and a verb. It is the main thought of a sentence and **can be used alone as a simple sentence.**

Examples:

1. Mrs. Smith bakes wonderful pies.
2. During the rainstorm, the children were frightened by the thunder.
3. She enjoys playing the piano.

2. Dependent Clause: It has a subject and verb but cannot be used as a simple sentence. A dependent clause is introduced by a dependent word (**subordinating conjunction**). See the following list.

after	even though	so that	whatever	which
although	ever since	than	when	whichever
as	how	that	whenever	while
as if	if	though	where	who
because	in order that	unless	whereas	whom
before	since	until	wherever	whose
even if	so (that)	what	whether	why

- Whenever a clause begins with one of the above dependent words (unless it is a question, which would never give you any trouble), it is dependent.
- If we take an independent clause such as: “**We finished the game.**” and put one of the dependent words in front of it, it becomes **dependent**:

Examples:

1. **After** we finished the game
 2. **Although** we finished the game
 3. **As** we finished the game
 4. **Before** we finished the game
 5. **If** we finished the game
 6. **Since** we finished the game
 7. **That** we finished the game
 8. **When** we finished the game
 9. **While** we finished the game
- The dependent clause can no longer stand alone. As you read it, you can hear that it doesn't make a complete statement. It leaves the reader expecting something more. It is an incomplete thought or fragment and must not be punctuated as a sentence.

- To correct such an incomplete thought or fragment, simply add **an independent clause**:

Examples:

1. After we finished the game, we went to the clubhouse.
2. While we finished the game, the others waited.
3. We gave up the court when we had finished the game.
4. We were happy that we had finished the game.

- In short, **every sentence must have at least one independent clause**.
- When a dependent clause comes at the beginning of a sentence, it is followed by a comma as in the example above. The comma prevents misreading, as in the following:

When he entered, the room became quiet.

- **Sometimes the dependent word is the subject of the dependent clause:**

Examples:

1. I took the highway that was finished just last month.
2. The girl who was standing by the window is gone.

- **Sometimes the dependent clause is in the middle of the independent clause:**

Examples:

1. The highway that was finished last month goes to Indianapolis.
2. The book which is on the shelf is excellent.

Note: the word **that** does not always introduce a dependent clause; it may be a pronoun (That is my book) or a describing word (I like that book).