**Clauses and Sentences**

1. **What Is a Clause?**

**A clause is a word group that contains a verb and its subject and that is used as a sentence or as part of a sentence.**

EXAMPLES where were you yesterday when we needed you?

Every clause has both a subject and a verb. Not every clause expresses a complete thought, however.

SENTENCE A sitar is a stringed instrument that resembles a lute.

CLAUSE A sitar is a music instrument. [complete thought]

CLAUSE that resembles a lute [incomplete thought]

There are two basic kinds of clauses: the independent clause and the subordinate clause. Standing alone, an independent clause is a complete sentence. A subordinate clause, like a word or a phrase, acts as a single part of speech and by itself is not a complete sentence.

* 1. **The Independent Clause**

An independent (or main) clause expresses a complete thought and can stand by itself as a sentence.

EXAMPLES The Mexican artist José Guadalupe Posada opposed the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. [one independent clause]

In his paintings, Posada attacked the Díaz regime, and he made thousands of inexpensive prints of his work. [two independent clauses joined by **and**]

Posada’s art helped to stir the social unrest that led to the overthrow of Díaz in the revolution of 1910. [an independent clause combined with a subordinate clause.]

* 1. **The Subordinate Clause**

A subordinate (or dependent) clause does not express a complete thought and cannot stand by itself as a sentence.

EXAMPLES **whoever knows the song** may join us.

**As we were celebrating my brother’s birthday**, the neighbour joined us.

The meaning of a subordinate clause becomes clear only when the clause is combined with an independent clause.

* + 1. **The Adjective Clause**

An adjective clause is a subordinate clause that modifies a noun or a pronoun.

An adjective clause usually follows the word or words it modifies and tells what kind or which one.

EXAMPLES The report **that Diego wrote** was on the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

Amanda is someone **whom I admire.**

Mark Twain is the writer **whose books I have enjoyed the most**.

* **Relative Pronouns:** that, which, who, whom, whose

An adjective clause is usually introduced by a relative pronoun—a word that relates the clause to the word or words the clause modifies.

A relative pronoun has three functions.

(1) It refers to a preceding noun or pronoun—the antecedent.

(2) It connects the adjective clause with the rest of the sentence.

(3) It performs a function within its own clause by serving as a subject, a direct object, an indirect object, an object of a preposition, or a modifier in the adjective clause.

EXAMPLES: Mr. Mendoza is a good counsellor **who** never betrays a confidence.

Have you practiced the speech **that** you will give on Friday?

The mariachi band in **which** I play once performed for Governor Tommy Thompson.

Han-Ling is the one **whose** essay took first place.

**Note:** To modify a time or place, an adjective clause may be introduced by a relative adverb, such as when or where.

EXAMPLE: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., dreamed of the day **when** freedom and justice would reign in the United States.

**Note**: Sometimes the relative pronoun or relative adverb is not expressed but is understood.

EXAMPLES: The vase [that] my family brought from the Philippines was made by my grandmother.

Do you remember the first time [when] we met each other?

**Note**: Depending on how it is used, an adjective clause is either essential or nonessential. An essential clause provides information that is necessary to the meaning of a sentence. A nonessential clause provides additional information that can be omitted without changing the basic meaning of a sentence. A nonessential clause is set off by commas.

ESSENTIAL Students **who are auditioning for the school play** should meet in the auditorium at 4:15 P.M.

NONESSENTIAL Liza Minnelli, **whose mother, Judy Garland, was best known for starring in The Wizard of Oz,** earned her own fame as a singer and actress.

* + 1. **The Noun Clause**

A noun clause is a subordinate clause that is used as a noun. A noun clause may be used as a subject, a predicate nominative, a direct object, an indirect object, an object of a preposition, or an appositive.

SUBJECT **How students can apply for college loans** was the speaker’s topic.

PREDICATE NOMINATIVE My suggestion is **that we all meet again tomorrow.**

DIRECT OBJECT I wonder **whether Columbus was truly the first European to explore the Americas.**

INDIRECT OBJECT Mrs. Romero offers **whoever completes additional assignments** extra credit.

OBJECT OF A PREPOSITION Write your research paper about **whomever you admire most**.

APPOSITIVE Copernicus’s theory **that the sun, not the earth, is the centre of our solar system** was rejected at the time.

**Common Introductory Words for Noun Clauses**: how whenever who- if where whoever- that wherever -whom - what whether whomever - whatever which whose - when whichever why.

**Note**: The word that introduces a noun clause may or may not serve a grammatical function in the noun clause.

EXAMPLES Tawana will do well at **whatever she attempts**. [The word whatever introduces the noun clause and serves as the direct object of the verb attempts.]

Does Luís think **that Puerto Rico will become a state someday?** [The word that introduces the noun clause but does not serve a grammatical function in the clause.]

**Note**: Sometimes the word that introduces a noun clause is not expressed but is understood.

EXAMPLE I think [that] I. M. Pei is one of the judges of the design contest.

**Note**: Another type of noun clause is the infinitive clause. An infinitive clause consists of an infinitive with a subject, along with any modifiers and complements the infinitive has. The entire infinitive clause can function as the direct object of a verb.

EXAMPLE Judy’s father expected **her to finish her homework**. [The entire infinitive clause is the direct object of the verb expected. Her is the subject of the infinitive to finish. The infinitive to finish has a direct object, homework.]

Notice that the subject of an infinitive clause is in the objective case and that the infinitive takes the place of a main verb in the infinitive clause.

* + 1. **The Adverb Clause**

An adverb clause is a subordinate clause that modifies a verb, an adjective, or an adverb. An adverb clause tells how, how much, when, where, why, to what extent, or under what conditions.

EXAMPLES The squirrel ran **as though it were being chased by a cat**.

Many Western artists were influenced by the Asian art they saw **while they were studying in Paris.**

Spain considered the conquest of Cuba essential **because the island is strategically located at the entrance to the Gulf of Mexico**.

Davita likes instrumental music **more than she likes opera.**

* **Subordinating Conjunctions**

An adverb clause is introduced by a subordinating conjunction—a word or word group that shows the relationship between the adverb clause and the word or words that the clause modifies.

**Common Subordinating Conjunctions:** after- as though- since- when- although- because- so that-whenever- as before -than- where- as if- if- though- wherever- as long as- in order- that- unless- whether- as soon as- provided that- until- while.

* + 1. **The Elliptical Clause**

Part of a clause may be left out when its meaning can be clearly understood in the context of the sentence. Such a clause is called an elliptical clause.

Most elliptical clauses are adverb clauses. In the examples on the following page, the words in brackets may be omitted because their meanings can be understood from the context.

EXAMPLES Australia is smaller than the other continents [are small].

When [you are] taking notes, use your own words.

**Note**: Often the meaning of an elliptical clause depends on the form of the pronoun in it.

EXAMPLES I like Anne as much as **she** [likes Anne].

I like Anne as much as [I like] **her**.

1. **What is a Sentence**

**A sentence is a group of words that you use to communicate your ideas. Every sentence is formed from one or more clauses and expresses a complete thought.**

**Sentences Classified According to Structure**

Depending on its structure, a sentence can be classified as simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex.

* 1. **A simple sentence** contains one independent clause and no subordinate clauses. A simple sentence may contain a compound subject, a compound verb, or both, and any number of phrases.

EXAMPLES Great literature stirs the imagination.

Located on an island in Lake Texcoco, Tenochtitlán was the capital of the Aztec empire and may have had more than 100,000 inhabitants in the 1500s.

* 1. **A compound sentence** contains two or more independent clauses and no subordinate clauses.

**Independent clauses may be joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, nor, or, so, or yet), by a semicolon, or by a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb or transitional expression.**

EXAMPLES

Located on an island in Lake Texcoco, Tenochtitlán was the capital of the Aztec empire, and it may have had more than 100,000 inhabitants in the 1500s.

In 1528, the Spanish explored the area near present-day Tampa, but Europeans did not begin settling there until 1823.

The Aswan High Dam is on the Nile River in Egypt; it is one of the world’s largest dams.

We should leave early; otherwise, we will miss our bus. [two independent clauses joined by a semicolon, the conjunctive adverb otherwise, and a comma]

Not all birds fly south for the winter; for instance, cardinals live in the northern states throughout the year. [two independent clauses joined by a semicolon, the transitional expression for instance, and a comma]

**Common Conjunctive Adverbs:** also- incidentally- next- anyway- indeed- nonetheless- besides- instead- otherwise- consequently- likewise- still- finally- meanwhile- then- furthermore- moreover- therefore-however- nevertheless- thus.

**Common Transitional Expressions:** after all- even so- in fact- as a result- for example- in other words- at any rate- for instance- on the contrary- by the way- in addition- on the other hand.

* 1. **A complex sentence** contains one independent clause and at least one subordinate clause.

EXAMPLES

Yiddish, **which is a Germanic language**, is now spoken by millions of people all over the world.

**After Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated at Waterloo**, he was exiled to Saint Helena, **where he died.**

**Whatever you can give** will be very much appreciated. [The independent clause is Whatever will be very much appreciated. The subordinate clause is the noun clause Whatever you can give.]

* 1. **A compound-complex sentence** contains two or more independent clauses and at least one subordinate clause.

EXAMPLES

The interest that you pay on a car loan will increase the cost of the car, so be sure to shop for the lowest interest rate. [The two independent clauses are The interest will increase the cost of the car and be sure to shop for the lowest interest rate. The subordinate clause is the adjective clause that you pay on a car loan.]

Hong Kong had been a crown colony of Britain since 1898; however, as my teacher explained, it reverted to China when the treaty expired in 1997. [The two independent clauses are Hong Kong had been a crown colony of Britain since 1898 and it reverted to China. One subordinate clause is the adverb clause as my teacher explained. The adverb clause when the treaty expired in 1997 is another subordinate clause.]