Clauses

Definition

A **clause** is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate (verb). A clause can be further classified into two types:

1. **Independent Clause (Main Clause)**: An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence. It has a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought. For example, in the sentence "**I love reading books**", "I" is the subject, "love" is the verb, and the whole sentence is an independent clause.

2. **Dependent Clause (Subordinate Clause)**: A dependent clause cannot stand alone as a sentence. It also has a subject and a verb, but it does not express a complete thought and needs an independent clause to complete its meaning. For example, in the sentence "I will go to the library **when I finish my homework**", "when I finish my homework" is a dependent clause.

It's important to note that a single sentence can contain multiple clauses. For example, in the sentence "**I love reading books, and I go to the library every week**", there are two independent clauses: "I love reading books" and "I go to the library every week". They are joined by the coordinating conjunction "and".

Types of Clauses

- **Independent Clauses**

An **independent clause** is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate (verb) and expresses a complete thought. An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence.

Let's explore this concept with some examples.

Simple Sentence

Consider the sentence: "**John reads books**."

In this sentence, "John" is the subject, "reads" is the verb, and "books" is the object. The entire sentence is an independent clause because it expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence.

Compound Sentence

Now, let's look at a compound sentence: "**John reads books, and he likes mysteries**."

This sentence contains two independent clauses: "John reads books" and "he likes mysteries". These two clauses are joined by the coordinating conjunction "and". Each clause can stand alone as a sentence, which is the defining characteristic of independent clauses.

Complex Sentence

In a complex sentence, an independent clause is paired with one or more dependent clauses. For instance, consider the sentence: "**John reads books because he likes mysteries**."

In this sentence, "John reads books" is an independent clause, and "because he likes mysteries" is a dependent clause. The independent clause can stand alone as a sentence, but the dependent clause cannot.

Compound-Complex Sentence

A compound-complex sentence contains at least two independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. For example: "**John reads books, and he likes mysteries because they are exciting**."

In this sentence, "John reads books" and "he likes mysteries" are independent clauses, and "because they are exciting" is a dependent clause.

- **Dependent Clauses**

A **dependent clause**, also known as a subordinate clause, is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb but does not express a complete thought.

A dependent clause cannot stand alone as a sentence and is always used together with an independent clause to form a complex or compound-complex sentence.

Let's explore this concept further with some examples.

Adverbial Clause

An "Adverbial Clause", also known as a "Subordinate Clause", is a dependent clause that begins with a subordinating conjunction. It indicates a relationship of dependency to information included in the independent clause. Just like adverbs, the adverbial clause answers questions such as:

- Why?
- Where?
- When?
- Under what circumstances?

Let's consider this example: "**John reads books** when he has free time"

In this sentence, "**John reads books**" is an independent clause, and "when he has free time" is a dependent (adverbial) clause. The dependent clause provides additional information about when John reads books.

Let's look at more examples:

- "**He drives quickly**."

In this example, the adverb "quickly" modifies the verb "drive" by specifying how the action of the verb is performed.

- "**She left before everybody noticed her**."

The clause "**before everybody noticed her**" is a group of words that acts as an adverb by modifying the verb "left" and specifying when the action of the verb was performed.

In essence, adverbial or subordinate clauses provide additional information about the verb in a sentence, acting as an adverb would.

Adjectival Clause

An "Adjectival Clause" also known as a "Relative Clause", like an adjective, modifies the noun or pronoun that precedes it.

For instance, in the sentence: "**The book that John is reading is interesting**,".

"The book is interesting" is an independent clause, and "that John is reading" is a dependent (adjectival) clause. The dependent clause provides additional information about the book.

A relative clause begins with a relative word. Let's look at the following examples:

- "The red car is broken down."

In this example, we have the adjective "red" (a single word) that modifies the noun "car".

- "The man **whose jacket is black** is my teacher."

The clause "**whose jacket is black**" modifies the noun "the man". It, therefore, acts as an adjective.

Unlike the first example where the adjective modifying the noun is a single word, in the second example, it's an entire group of words "**whose jacket is black**" that plays the same role and acts as a single part of speech, the adjective.

Adjectival clauses are often preceded by a relative pronoun:

- "I am going to meet the man **who called me yesterday**."

- "She bought the book **that I told her about**."

- "The story **which they keep telling is a lie**."

- "The man **whom I was with is my boss**."

- "The man **whose jacket is black is my teacher**."

Relative clauses can also be preceded by relative adjectives:

- "This is the house **where I lived**."

- "We finally decided the time **when we have to meet**."

- "Nobody knows the reason **why she left**."

In essence, adjectival or relative clauses provide additional information about a noun or pronoun in a sentence, acting as an adjective would.

Noun Clause

A noun clause is a dependent clause that acts as a noun. It can be a subject, an object, or a complement.

For example, in the sentence: "**What John said surprised me**," "What John said" is a dependent (noun) clause acting as the subject of the sentence, and "surprised me" is the independent clause.

A nominal clause begins with the same words as an adjectival clause such as "**that, who, which, when, etc**." the difference lies in the grammatical function it plays within the sentence.

<u>Acting as a subject:</u>

▪ "**What you did** solved the problem."

In this example, "**What you did**" is a nominal clause that acts as the subject of the verb "**solved**", specifying who performed the action "solved".

- Who solved the problem? = What you did.

<u>Acting as a direct object:</u>

▪ "She told me **what she thinks of the plan.**"

In this example, "**What she thinks of the plan**" is a nominal clause acting as a direct object of the verb "**told**", specifying who received the action of the verb.

● What did she tell you? = What she thinks of the plan.

<u>Acting as the object of a preposition:</u>

▪ "I keep thinking **of what he told me**."

In this example, "**What he told me**" is a nominal clause acting as the object of the preposition "**of**".

▪ "He asked **about where everybody was.**"

In this example, "**where everybody was**" is a nominal clause acting as the object of the preposition "**about**".

In essence, nominal clauses provide additional information about the subject or object of a sentence, acting as a noun would.

Clause Connectors

- **Coordinating conjunctions**

Coordinating conjunctions are a type of clause connector used to join words, phrases, or clauses of equal rank. For example:

> ➤ "John reads books, **for** he loves literature."

In this sentence, "**John reads books**" and "**he loves literature**" are independent clauses connected by the coordinating conjunction "**for**".

> ➤ "John reads books **and** he writes reviews."

Here, "**John reads books**" and "**he writes reviews**" are independent clauses joined by "**and**".

> ➤ "John neither reads books **nor** writes reviews."

In this sentence, "**John neither reads books**" and "**writes reviews**" are connected by "**nor**".

> ➤ "John reads books, **but** he doesn't write reviews."

Here, "**John reads books**" and "**he doesn't write reviews**" are independent clauses connected by "**but**".

- **Subordinating conjunctions**

Subordinating conjunctions are a type of clause connector used to join a dependent clause to an independent clause. They introduce the dependent clause and indicate a relationship of time, cause, contrast, or condition between the two clauses. For example:

> ➤ "John went to the library **after** he finished his homework."

In this sentence, "**John went to the library**" is an independent clause, and "**after he finished his homework**" is a dependent clause introduced by the subordinating conjunction "**after**".

> ➢ "**Although** John loves literature, he doesn't like writing essays."

Here, "**he doesn't like writing essays**" is an independent clause, and "**Although John loves literature**" is a dependent clause.

> ➢ "John reads books **because** he loves literature."

In this sentence, "**John reads books**" is an independent clause, and "**because he loves literature**" is a dependent clause.

> ➢ "John finished his homework **before** he went to the library."

Here, "**John finished his homework**" is an independent clause, and "**before he went to the library**" is a dependent clause.

- **Relative pronouns**

Relative pronouns are a type of pronoun that introduce relative clauses. They connect a clause or phrase to a noun or pronoun. For example:

- "The woman **who** lives next door is a doctor."

In this sentence, **'who'** is used to connect the main clause **'The woman is a doctor'** with the relative clause **'lives next door'**.

- "The man to **whom** I sold my car moved away."

Here, **'whom'** connects the main clause '**The man moved away**' with the relative clause '**I sold my car to**'.

- "The girl **whose** cat is missing is very upset."

In this sentence, **'whose'** connects the main clause '**The girl is very upset**' with the relative clause **'cat is missing'**.

- "The book **which** is on the table is mine."

Here, **'which'** connects the main clause **'The book is mine'** with the relative clause **'is on the table'**.

Punctuation in Clauses

Now, let's dive into the rules of punctuation in clauses, specifically focusing on comma usage with independent and dependent clauses.

Independent Clauses and Commas:

An independent clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought. It can stand alone as a sentence.

Example: "**She loves to read books.**" This is an independent clause because it has a subject ("She") and a verb ("loves") and it expresses a complete thought.

When you have two independent clauses, you can join them with a conjunction (**and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet**). A comma usually precedes the conjunction.

Example: "She loves to read books**, and** she often goes to the library**.**"

Here, "**She loves to read books**" and "**she often goes to the library**" are both independent clauses, and they are joined by the conjunction "**and**" with a comma before it.

Dependent Clauses and Commas:

A dependent clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb but does not express a complete thought. It cannot stand alone as a sentence and is often marked by a dependent marker word.

Example: "**Because she loves to read books**"

This is a dependent clause because it has a subject ("**she**") and a verb ("**loves**"), but it does not express a complete thought.

When a **_dependent clause comes before an independent clause_**, it should be **_followed by a comma_**.

Example: "**Because she loves to read books, she often goes to the library.**" Here, "**Because she loves to read books**" is a dependent clause and "**she often goes to the library**" is an independent clause. The dependent clause comes first, so it is followed by a comma.

But if the **_independent clause comes first, no comma is required_**.

Example: "**She often goes to the library because she loves to read books.**"

Here, "**She often goes to the library**" is an independent clause and "**because she loves to read books**" is a dependent clause. The independent clause comes first, so no comma is required.

Common Mistakes with Clauses and How to Avoid Them

This section will discuss three common mistakes when using clauses: fragment sentences and comma splices:.

Fragment Sentences

Fragment sentences are incomplete sentences. They usually lack a subject, a verb, or both, and they don't express a complete thought.

Example: "While I was running."

This sentence is a fragment because it doesn't express a complete thought. It leaves the reader wondering, "**_What happened while you were running?_**"

To correct a fragment sentence, you need to add the missing element to make it a complete sentence.

Correct: "While I was running, I saw a beautiful sunset."

Comma Splices

A **comma splice** occurs when two independent clauses are joined with just a comma.

Example: "I love reading books, I read every day."

Here, "I love reading books" and "I read every day" are both independent clauses that can stand alone as sentences. Joining them with just a comma is incorrect.

You can correct a comma splice in several ways: by adding a coordinating conjunction after the comma, by changing the comma to a semicolon, or by making each clause a separate sentence.

Correct: "I love reading books**, and** I read every day."

Practice Exercises

- Exercise 1: Identifying types of clauses

Identify whether the underlined clause in each sentence is an independent clause, a dependent clause, or a relative clause.

1. **Despite the heavy rain**, we decided to go out for a walk.
2. The book that **you recommended** was really interesting.
3. I will go to the party **if I finish my homework**.
4. **She runs every morning**, which is why she's so fit.
5. The man **who lives next door** is a doctor.
6. **Because it was raining**, we decided to stay at home.
7. I don't know **why she was late**.

8. The movie **was really exciting**.
9. **After the movie ended**, we went for dinner.
10. The cake, **which my mother baked**, was delicious.

Answers:

1. Dependent clause
2. Relative clause
3. Dependent clause
4. Independent clause
5. Relative clause
6. Dependent clause
7. Dependent clause
8. Independent clause
9. Dependent clause
10. Relative clause

- Exercise 2: Correcting common mistakes

Each sentence below contains a mistake in the use of dependent and independent clauses. Correct the mistakes.

1. Because I like to play soccer it is my favorite sport.
2. Although, she was tired but she finished her homework.
3. I enjoy reading it relaxes me.
4. While I was cooking, and the phone rang.
5. She loves to travel, because exploring new cultures.
6. Although he studied hard. But he didn't pass the exam.
7. I will go to the party if I will finish my homework.

Corrected Sentences:

1. I like to play soccer because it is my favorite sport.

2. Although she was tired, she finished her homework.
3. I enjoy reading because it relaxes me.
4. While I was cooking, the phone rang.
5. She loves to travel because she enjoys exploring new cultures.
6. Although he studied hard, he didn't pass the exam.
7. I will go to the party if I finish my homework.

- Exercise 3: Constructing complex sentences with given clauses

Combine the given clauses into a single complex sentence.

1. Clauses:
   - I like to play soccer.
   - It is my favorite sport.
2. Clauses:
   - She was tired.
   - She finished her homework.
3. Clauses:
   - I enjoy reading.
   - It relaxes me.
4. Clauses:
   - I was cooking.
   - The phone rang.
5. Clauses:
   - She loves to travel.
   - She enjoys exploring new cultures.
6. Clauses:
   - He studied hard.
   - He didn't pass the exam.
7. Clauses:
   - I will go to the party.

- I finish my homework.

Complex Sentences:

1. Because I like to play soccer, it is my favorite sport.
2. Although she was tired, she finished her homework.
3. I enjoy reading because it relaxes me.
4. While I was cooking, the phone rang.
5. She loves to travel because she enjoys exploring new cultures.
6. Although he studied hard, he didn't pass the exam.
7. I will go to the party if I finish my homework.

FAQ

1. What is a clause in English grammar? A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate. It is the smallest grammatical unit that can express a complete thought.

2. What are the different types of clauses in English grammar? There are two main types of clauses in English grammar: independent clauses and dependent clauses. An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence, while a dependent clause cannot stand alone and is dependent on an independent clause.

3. What is an independent clause? An independent clause is a clause that can stand alone as a sentence. It has a subject and a predicate and expresses a complete thought. For example, "She runs every morning."

4. What is a dependent clause? A dependent clause is a clause that cannot stand alone as a sentence. It is dependent on an independent clause to express a complete thought. For example, in the sentence "Because it was raining, we decided to stay at home," "Because it was raining" is a dependent clause.

5. How are clauses used in complex sentences? In complex sentences, one or more dependent clauses are combined with an independent clause. The dependent clause can provide additional information about the time, reason, condition, or manner of the action in the independent clause. For example, "Although she was tired, she finished her homework." Here, "Although she was tired" is a dependent clause providing a reason for the action in the independent clause "she finished her homework."