Independent and Subordinate Clauses

What They Are and How to Use Them

By: Kalli Bradshaw
Do you remember the difference between

a subject

and

a predicate?
Identify the *subject* and *predicate* in this sentence:

Mary decided to go home after school.
Divide the sentence into these parts:

Mary / decided to go home after school.

*Mary* is the subject of the sentence because the sentence is describing something Mary did.

*Decided to go home after school* is the predicate because it describes what it is that Mary did.
So…

If you can find the subject and predicate of a sentence then you should have no trouble picking out the clause of the sentence.

A sentence clause is a group of words containing a subject and a predicate and is used as a part of a sentence.

There are two main types of clauses…
No! Not this kind of Claus!
These types of clauses:

Independent

and

Subordinate
An independent clause can stand alone if removed from the sentence.

- When by itself an independent clause becomes a simple sentence.

Example of two independent clauses:

Mary went straight to the bus stop after school, but she forgot to take her homework with her.

and

Mary went straight to the bus stop after school, but she forgot to take her homework with her.
A **subordinate clause** does not express a complete thought and cannot stand alone if removed from the sentence.

- A subordinate clause is always combined in some way with an independent clause.
- Look for key words: *when, which, as, while, since, because, who...*

Example:

*When she finally reached home,* Mary remembered that her homework was in her desk at school.

- The subordinate clause in red cannot stand by itself without the independent clause after the comma.
Can you identify the independent clauses in these sentences?

Mary called Bob, and he gave her the next day’s homework assignment.

Independent Clause #1:

Independent Clause #2:
Can you identify the independent clauses in these sentences?

Mary called Bob, and he gave her the next day’s homework assignment.

Independent Clause #1: Mary called Bob

Independent Clause #2: he gave her the next day’s homework assignment

- Note how these clauses can be sentences all on their own.
Can you identify the **independent** and **subordinate** clauses in these sentences?

After Mary finished her homework, she ate dinner.

**Independent Clause:**

**Subordinate Clause:**
Can you identify the independent and subordinate clauses in these sentences?

After Mary finished her homework, she ate dinner.

Independent Clause:  she ate dinner

Subordinate Clause:  After Mary finished her homework
Another Example:

I decided to make hamburgers for dinner, which everyone in the family enjoys.

Independent clause?

Subordinate clause?
Another Example:

I decided to make hamburgers for dinner, which everyone in the family enjoys.

Independent clause?

I decided to make hamburgers for dinner

Subordinate clause?

which everyone in the family enjoys
Once you understand the difference between independent and subordinate clauses, you’ll be ready to learn about other types of clauses such as:

The Adjective Clause
The Noun Clause
The Adverb Clause
References

What is an Adverb?

Words which are used to modify verbs, adjectives or adverbs are usually referred to as **adverbs**.

I **often** visit the library

It is **surprisingly** **hot** today.

The train travels **very** **quickly**.
What is a clause?

It is a group of words containing a subject and its verb. A clause forms a sentence or part of a sentence and often functions as a noun, adjective or adverb.

Example:

"It was late when he arrived"
What is an Adverb Clause?

A group of words which contains a subject and a finite verb (the main verb in a sentence) that describes a verb, an adjective and another adverb.
Adverb Clause can be divided into:

1. Concession
2. Time
3. Reason
4. Contrast
5. Result
6. Purpose
7. Place
8. Manner
1. Adverb Clause of Concession

These clauses are introduced by though, although, even though, no matter how, no matter what and as, etc.
1. Adverb Clause of Concession

- Although he is small, he is very strong.
- No matter how smart they are, they are required to do the revision.
- The girl was still dead no matter what the doctor did.

“They show a contrast in ideas. The main or independent clauses show the unexpected outcome”
1. Adverb Clause of Concession

- Although,
- Though,
- Even though,
- Even if,
- While,
- Whatever,
- Whenever,
- No matter
2. Adverb Clause of Time

These clauses are introduced by when, when, whenever, while, as, before, after, till, until, since and as soon as,
2. Adverb Clause of Time

- *When* he arrives, he will tell us the truth.
- Mary was dancing *while* John was singing.
- The train left *as* we arrived.
2. Adverb Clause of Time

- I will stay with you until your mother comes home.
- After he had got the money, he left home immediately.
3. Adverb Clause of Reason

- These clauses are introduced by because, since, for and as, etc.
3. Adverb Clause of Reason

- I was late because I could not catch the bus.
- Since I was late, I took a taxi.
- The manager dismissed Mary, for she was very lazy.
- As the weather was bad, we cancelled the picnic.
4. Adverb Clause of Contrast

- These clauses are introduced by *whereas* and *while*
4. Adverb Clause of Contrast

- We took the train **whereas** Pete drove.

- **While** Tom is a good math student, Pam does well in English.
5. Adverb Clause of Result

These clauses are always linked with *so that*,

*so + adj. / adv. + that* and *such + a + noun*

+ *that*, etc.
5. Adverb Clause of Result

- Tom was so weak that he could not run.
- It was such a strange story that no one believed it.
6. Adverb Clause of Purpose

These clauses are always linked with so *that*,

*in order that*, *for fear that*, *in case*, etc.
6. Adverb Clause of Purpose

- He arrived earlier, so that he would not be late.
- They brought a lot of food for fear that they would be hungry during the trip.
- She brought the credit card in case she did not have enough cash.
These clauses are introduced by *where* and *wherever*. 
7. Adverb Clause of Place

- Nobody knows *where* he has been to.
- He travels *wherever* he likes.
8. Adverb Clause of Manner

These clauses are introduced by *as, as if* and *as though.*
8. Adverb Clause of Manner

- Please do *as* I have told you.
- * He cries *as if* he were mad.
- * He speaks *as though* he were the boss.

* The subjunctive is used after *as if* and *as though.*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylvCDgd4_fA

The link about will help you go over this topic some more.
ADJECTIVE CLAUSES
ADJECTIVE CLAUSES

- dependent clauses that must be joined to independent clauses
- describe nouns and pronouns
- often placed in a sentence right after the noun they describe
- add details to sentences by functioning as adjectives
ADJECTIVE (RELATIVE) CLAUSES

• Adjective clauses begin with one of the relative pronouns such as who, whom, whose, where, that, which,

• Also called *relative clauses*. 
Relative Pronouns & Relative Clauses

- **Who**
- Refers to people, used as subject in the clause

The lady **who** teaches in Political Science department is my mentor.

(Relative pronoun as the **subject** of the clause)
Relative Pronouns & Relative Clauses

- **Whom**
  - Refers to people, used as object or object of preposition

  (Formal grammar recommends *whom*, not *who*, in the object position)

- **Sally, who(m) he knew, arrived yesterday.**
  (Relative pronoun as the object of the clause)

- **The student of whom he spoke was a foreigner.**
  (Relative pronoun as the object of a preposition)
Relative Pronouns & Relative Clauses

- **Which or that**
- **Refers to things, animals**

- The watch **which** Ken bought was expensive.

- The ring **that** Jamie wears is from her husband.

- The lion **that** escaped last night was captured.

(Note: the sentence using *which* is more formal than the one with *that*)
Relative Pronouns & Relative Clauses

- Whose
  - Refers to possession/ownership

- The father whose child is missing is frantic!

- The company whose manager has resigned is in dire straits.
Relative Pronouns & Relative Clauses

- **When**
  - Refers to a *time* (in + year, in + month, on + day,...).
  - It cannot be a subject.
  - It can be omitted

- I will never forget the day *when* I graduated.
- I will never forget the day *on which* I graduated.
- I will never forget the day *that* I graduated.
- I will never forget the day I graduated.
Relative Pronouns & Relative Clauses

- **Where**
  - Refers to a place (in + country, in + city, at + school,...).
  - It cannot be a subject.
  - It can be omitted but a preposition (at, in, to) usually must be added.

- The house *where* he stays is old.
- The house *in which* he stays is old.
- The house *which* he stays *in* is old.
- The house *that* he stays *in* is old.
- The house he stays *in* is old.
Relative Pronouns & Relative Clauses

- Why
- Refers to reason
- It can be omitted

- I don’t know why he winked.
- I don’t know the reason why he winked.
- I don’t know the reason he winked.
Adjective Clauses: Restrictive & Non-restrictive Clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restrictive Clauses</th>
<th>Non-restrictive Clauses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>are necessary for identification—tell exactly which thing or person</td>
<td>are interesting with extra information -but don’t identify or tell “which one”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO NOT have commas around clause</td>
<td>ALWAYS have commas around clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also known as identifying or defining clauses</td>
<td>Also known as non-identifying or non-defining clauses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Restrictive Adjective/Relative Clauses

Examples:

• The soccer player who scored the goal is from Liverpool.
• The girl that borrows my book is my cousin.
• The district where I live is near the post office.
Non- Restrictive Adjective/Relative Clauses

Examples:

• Ms. Tan, who is my English tutor, went to Korea last winter.
• My dog, which is barking, is in the backyard.
• William decided to reject the offer, which upset his manager.
Compare Restrictive & Non-restrictive Clauses

1. My brother who lives in Bukit Timah is an accountant.

- This sentence suggests that I have more than one brother. “Who lives in Bukit Timah” identifies this brother, not the one who lives in Clementi.

2. My brother, who lives in Bukit Timah, is an accountant.

- This sentence suggests that I only have one brother, “who lives in Bukit Timah”.
Which is logically correct?

1. My father, who is a taxi driver, doesn’t like to exercise.

2. My father who is a taxi driver doesn’t like to exercise.
1. My father, who is a taxi driver, doesn’t like to exercise. (Correct!)

2. My father who is a taxi driver doesn’t like to exercise. (This suggests you have more than one father!)
Which is logically correct?

- **Situation:** You have 3 sisters and you have already made that clear in preceding sentences. One is a doctor, one an air stewardess, and one a model.

1. My sister who is a doctor is not married.
2. My sister, who is a doctor, is not married.
Answer

1. My sister who is a doctor is not married.
   (Correct! This tells which sister, so it’s identifying.)

2. My sister, who is a doctor, is not married.
   (Identifying information should not have commas around it.)
Which is correct?

1. Paul Smith who is an excellent researcher is from England.

2. Paul Smith, who is an excellent researcher, is from England.
1. Paul Smith who is an excellent researcher is from England.

(Note that proper nouns are considered already identified, so the adjective clause needs commas.)

2. Paul Smith, who is an excellent researcher, is from England. (Correct!)
Which is correct?

1. The wind, that is howling, is making me nervous.

2. The wind, which is howling, is making me nervous.
Answer

1. The wind, that is howling, is making me nervous. (Never use commas with a “that” clause.)

2. The wind, which is howling, is making me nervous. (Correct!)
References


Web resources

- On how to use a relative clause (also links on the page on defining/restrictive) and non-defining/non-restrictive relative clauses)

http://esl.about.com/od/grammaradvanced/a/relative_clause.htm

A grammar website on relative clauses giving all the details of relative clauses and provide exercises. If you want to know relative clauses inside out, visit:

Videos on Relative Clauses

- On defining relative clauses (with movie clips)
  http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-486183297429660222#docid=-1240715167746622451

- Distinguish the use of “who” and “whom” in a relative clause
  http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-486183297429660222#docid=-359500722742197356