

Writing Centre

THE CLAUSE

A main clause sometimes called an independent clause must contain a *subject* and a *verb*, as well as *express a complete thought*.

Examples:

Mary kicked the ball.

Mary = (the subject) kicked = the verb

A giant spider has made its home behind the toy box in Neil's bedroom.

Spider = (the subject) has made = verb

Here are 4 types of common Clauses:

- main (*independent*)
- subordinate (*dependent*)
- relative (*adjective*)
- noun

Main Clauses

Every main clause will follow this pattern:

Subject + **Verb** = **Complete Thought**

Here are some examples:

Lazy students complain.

students = subject | complain = verb

Water spilled over the glass and splashed onto the counter.

Water = subject | spilled, splashed = verbs

My dog loves apples.

dog = subject | loves = verb

The important point to remember is that every sentence must have *at least* one main clause. Otherwise, you will have a fragment.

Subordinate Clauses

Subordinate clauses will follow this pattern:

Subordinate Conjunction + **Subject** + **Verb** = **Incomplete Thought**

Here are some examples:

Whenever lazy students complain

Whenever = subordinate conjunction | students = subject | complain = verb

As water spilled over the glass and splashed onto the counter

As = subordinate conjunction | water = subject | spilled, splashed = verbs

Because my dog loves apples

Because = subordinate conjunction | dog = subject | loves = verb

A subordinate clause can *never* stand alone as a complete sentence. To complete the thought, you must attach each subordinate clause to a main clause. The punctuation follows the pattern below:

Subordinate Clause +, + **Main Clause.**

These are some revisions to the subordinate clauses above:

Whenever lazy students complain, Mrs. Russell throws chalk erasers at their heads.

Anthony ran for the paper towels *as water spilled over the glass and splashed onto the counter*.

Because my dog loves apples, he waits patiently when I stop at the market.

Relative Clauses

Relative clauses will begin with relative pronouns [such as *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, or *that*] or relative adverbs [*when*, *where*, or *why*]. The patterns look like this:

Relative Pronoun (or Relative Adverb) + Subject + Verb = Incomplete Thought

Relative Pronoun + Verb = Incomplete Thought

Here are some examples:

Whom Mrs. Peters hit in the head with a ruler

Whom = relative pronoun | Mrs. Peters = subject | hit = verb

When he chews and chews with great enthusiasm

When = relative adverb | he = subject | chews, chews = verbs

That had spilled over the glass and splashed onto the counter

That = relative pronoun | had spilled, splashed = verbs

Who loves apples

Who = relative pronoun | loves = verb

Like subordinate clauses, relative clauses cannot stand alone as complete sentences. You must connect them to main clauses to finish the thought. Look at these revisions of the relative clauses above:

The lazy students *whom Mrs. Peters hit in the head with a ruler* soon learned to keep their complaints to themselves. (Mrs. Peters was shortly fired.)

My dog Floyd, *who loves apples*, eats them under the kitchen table, *where he chews and chews with great enthusiasm*.

Anthony ran to get paper towels for the water *that had spilled over the glass and splashed onto the counter*.

To punctuate a relative clause you have to decide if the relative clause is essential or nonessential and then use commas accordingly.

Essential relative clauses do *not* require commas. A relative clause is essential when you need the information it provides. Look at this example:

A dog *that eats too many apples* will soon develop strong teeth.

Dog is non-specific. To know which dog we are talking about, we must have the information in the relative clause. Thus, the relative clause is essential and requires no commas.

Noun Clauses

Any clause that functions as a noun becomes a noun clause. Noun clauses generally begin with which, who, whoever, when, where, whether, whichever, those. Look at this example:

You really do not want to know the *ingredients* in grandma's soup.

ingredients = noun

You really do not want to know *what grandma adds to her soup*.

what grandma adds to her soup = noun clause

Sources:

Simmons, R. (2017). *The Clause*. Retrieved from <http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/clause.htm>



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