

Review of Basic Sentence Structure

What is a sentence?

A sentence is a group of words that contains both a SUBJECT and a VERB and together make at least one COMPLETE THOUGHT.

What does a subject do in a sentence?

A subject names who or what the sentence is about. Ask “Who or what is doing something?” in the sentence. If you can answer this question, your answer will be the subject.

EXAMPLE:

Joe ate four hotdogs at the game.

Who ate four hotdogs?

Joe did. Joe is the subject.

What does a verb do in a sentence?

A verb expresses action or a state of being in the sentence. Ask “What is he, she, or it doing?” or “How is he, she, or it being?” If you can answer this question, your answer will be the predicate, which includes the verb.

EXAMPLE:

Joe ate four hotdogs at the game.

What did Joe do?

He *ate four hotdogs at the game.*

“Ate” is the verb and “ate four hotdogs at the game” is the complete predicate.

What is an independent clause?

An independent clause is a group of words that has a subject and verb combination and forms a complete thought. Every sentence has at least one independent clause.

EXAMPLE:

We decided to go.

What is a dependent clause?

A dependent clause is a group of words that has a subject and verb combination but does not form a complete thought. The dependent clause cannot stand on its own. It needs to attach itself to an independent clause. A dependent clause clarifies or adds detail to its independent clause. A dependent clause often starts with a DEPENDENT CLAUSE MARKER word.

EXAMPLES OF A DEPENDENT CLAUSE MARKERS:

because	if	after
since	as	before
when	though	once
while	although	whether
until	unless	

When you see one of these words, it is a good sign that what comes after it is a dependent clause.

EXAMPLE:

Because *it was raining*, we decided to go.

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Dependent Clause

What is a phrase?

A phrase is group of words that does NOT contain a subject or a verb. A phrase cannot stand alone and is, therefore, always dependent. It needs to attach itself to an independent clause. A phrase, like the dependent clause, clarifies or adds detail to its independent clause.

EXAMPLE:

*Because it was raining, we decided to go **to the movies.***

Phrase