

ENGLISH

Grammar: Clauses



Clauses

What is a Clause?

A clause is a group of words containing a **subject (S)** and **predicate (P)**. It can stand on its own expressing complete meaning.

Example:

Seema will come.

The above sentence has a subject, i.e. '**Seema**', and a predicate, i.e. '**will come**'.

The two phrases when combined into one make complete sense and can stand independently as a sentence. Therefore, 'Seema will come.' qualifies as a clause.

Elements of a Clause

Clauses may also have other elements like an object (O), a complement (C) and an adverbial (A).
Examples:

Object

An Object is a noun or a pronoun that gets affected by the actions of the subjects. In other words, it receives the action.

1. **Akbar called** Birbal.

Subject: Akbar

Verb: called

Object: Birbal

Complement

A Complement is a word which is a noun, pronoun or an adjective that follows a verb and tells us more about the subject of the sentence.

2. **Ram is** clever.

Subject: Ram

Verb: is

Complement: clever

Adverbial

An Adverbial is a word or a phrase that answers questions such as when, where, how, how often and why an action is done. It plays the role of an adverb in the sentence.

3. **The rose bloomed** in the morning.

Subject: The rose

Verb: bloomed

Adverbial: in the morning

However, their presence is not mandatory. The subject and the predicate are the only two main components needed to qualify a phrase as a clause.

Types of Clauses

Clauses are classified into two broad categories—main or independent clause and subordinate or dependent clause.

Main Clause

An independent or **main clause** is a clause or a simple sentence which can stand on its own and can convey complete meaning. As the name suggests, it is not dependent on any other phrases or clauses for its meaning. It has only one **verb or verb phrase** which gives it its tense and meaning.

Let us look at some examples of **main** clauses.

- **There were fifty boys in the class.**
- **You have the wrong address.**
- **No man can serve two masters.**
- **We reached the venue** before the bridal party arrived.
- **The host offered us some refreshments** after we reached the venue.

Subordinate Clause

A dependent or **subordinate clause** is a clause which is dependent on the main clause for its complete meaning. Subordinate clauses usually begin with a subordinating conjunction or a relative pronoun.

Let us look at some examples of subordinate clauses.

- You can come in **whenever you are ready.**
- The food should be ready **before the recess bell rings.**
- Many people voted **in favour of the decision he made.**
- I do not believe **that she can pull off such a trick.**
- He refused to tell the truth **even after being threatened.**

Subordinate clauses are further classified into the following types based on the functions they perform.

Types of Subordinate Clauses

There are three types of subordinate clauses.

- Subordinate Noun Clause
- Subordinate Adjective Clause
- Subordinate Adverb Clause

Subordinate Noun Clause

A subordinate clause which performs the function of a noun in a sentence is called a subordinate noun clause. Asking the question 'What + verb' will reveal the noun clause in the sentence.

Examples:

- **Whatever you ate yesterday** is the cause of your stomach ache.
What is the cause of your stomach ache?
Whatever you ate yesterday
- **What he saw** surprised him immensely.
What surprised him immensely?
What he saw

In the sentences above, the subordinate clauses (marked in green) perform the function of a noun or a subject in the main clause; therefore, they are subordinate noun clauses.

- He does not know **who delivered the parcel**.
- May did not know **that the cat had run away**.

In the sentences above, the subordinate clauses (marked in green) perform the function of a noun or an **object** in the main clause; therefore, they are subordinate noun clauses.

Subordinate Adjective Clause

A subordinate clause which performs the function of an adjective in a sentence is called a subordinate adjective clause. Asking the question 'Which + subject+ verb' will reveal the adjective clause.

Examples:

- The **food** **which was served to us** was stale.

The clause '**which was served to us**' describes the noun **food**; therefore, it is a subordinate adjective clause.

Which food was stale?

The food which was served to us

- The **saplings** **which have grown over a foot** are more likely to survive the harsh summer.

The clause '**which have grown over a foot**' describes the noun **saplings**; therefore, it is a subordinate adjective clause.

Which saplings are more likely to survive the harsh summer?

The saplings which have grown over a foot

- I will be meeting **the man** who promised me a job today.

The clause 'who promised me a job' describes the noun **the man**; therefore, it is a subordinate adjective clause.

Which man will I be meeting today?

The man who promised me a job

- **The boy** who saved the lives of seven children during the floods will be felicitated on Independence Day.'

The clause 'who saved the lives of seven children during the floods' describes the noun '**The boy**' therefore, it is a subordinate adjective clause.

Which boy will be felicitated on Independence Day?

The boy who saved the lives of seven children during the floods

Subordinate Adverb Clause

A subordinate clause which performs the function of an adverb in a sentence is called a subordinate adverb clause. Like an adverb, an adverb clause also modifies a main verb or an adjective or other adverbs in a sentence. It answers questions such as when, where, why, how, to what extent, how much and how often.

Examples

- She insisted on leaving **before the guests arrived**.
When did she insist on leaving?
Before the guests arrived
- **Since the accused has confessed to the crime**, we can consider this as an open and shut case.
Why can we consider this as an open and shut case?
Since the accused has confessed to the crime
- Katherine's dog ran away **when it heard the sound of approaching footsteps**.
When did Katherine's dog run away?
when it heard the sound of approaching footsteps
- The display of fireworks will start **since the Sheikh graced us with his presence**.
Why did the display of fireworks start?
Since the Sheikh graced us with his presence