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<http://www.bpi.edu/ourpages/auto/2011/9/16/58978302/Clauses.pdf>.

## Clause explanations and definitions for cohesive and coherent writing

A review of:

Dependent and independent clauses (main clause and subordinate clauses)

Subordinating and coordinating conjunctions

Punctuation and clauses

Clauses are the building blocks of English. No sentence is made without clauses. In order to write more cohesively and coherently it is important to familiarise oneself with the different types of possible clauses and how to put them together.

A **clause** is usually made up of a **subject** and a **predicate** (usually a verb) (Dr. M. Dickerson: 2). The clause can be extended with a complement. They are what make sentences. These sentences can be **simple**, which means that the sentence has only one independent (main) clause. It could be **compound**, which means it has more than one main clause. It could be **complex**, which means it has one main clause and one or several subordinate clause, or it could be **compound-complex**, which means it has several main clauses and several subordinate clauses (Dr. M. Dickerson: 1). There are many types of clauses, but in this document we will only look at a few.

Clauses are connected by conjunctions or different types of **punctuation**. The conjunctions could be **coordinating** conjunctions or **subordinating** conjunctions.

### **An independent clause (or main clause):**

A simple sentence is made of an independent clause. An independent clause is a sentence with a subject and a predicate, which makes sense if you say it on its own. Each sentence should have at least one independent clause, otherwise the sentence is incomplete. We call this a sentence fragment. You can't connect two independent clauses with just a comma. This is called a comma splice, and is allowed in Spanish, but not in English. You can connect two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (see below), a semicolon, or a semicolon and a word like however.

Example: I saw a bear.

### **A dependent (subordinate) clause:**

A dependent clause is a clause that needs the help of an independent clause to make sense. For example: while I sleep. If you say this sentence on its own it is confusing, but if you put it together with an independent clause, it makes sense. A complex sentence has one main clause and one or several dependent clauses, and a compound-complex sentence has several main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses (Dr. M. Dickerson: 1).

For example: I talk while I sleep.

**A phrase:**

Is part of a sentence, but either the predicate or the subject is missing. This can be part of a sentence, but isn't a full sentence on its own.

For example: in the woods.

**Coordinating conjunction:**

You can remember the coordinating conjunctions by remembering the mnemonic FANBOYS. The coordinating conjunctions are FOR, AND, NOR, BUT, OR, YET, SO. The first letter of each spells FANBOYS. Coordinating conjunctions connect two main clauses that matter equally. For example: I like ice-cream, and I also like chocolate. Because they are so small, you usually put a comma in front of a coordinating conjunction. You don't when you put the conjunction before a phrase, or a single word.

For example: I'm scared of cats, dogs and mice!

**Subordinating conjunction:**

Subordinating conjunctions are all of the other connecting words you can think of. Some examples are: because, therefore, thus. These connect two clauses which are considered to be unequal. You can put subordinating conjunctions at the beginning of the sentence, but if you do that, you have to put a comma after the first clause. You can also put it in the middle of the sentence to connect an independent clause with a dependent clause.

*For example: If it rains, the grass will get wet.*

*See these ASK documents for additional information:*

*Noun clauses:*

*Adverb clauses:*

*Adjective clauses:*