

A **clause** is a part of a sentence that contains a complete **subject** (person, object or idea) and a complete **predicate** (explanation of the action, condition or effect of the subject). There are two types of clauses:

1. Independent clause (or main clause)
2. Dependent clause (or subordinate clause)

**Independent Clause:** expresses a complete thought and has a subject and a verb. It is the main thought of the sentence and can stand alone correctly as a sentence without anything attached to it.

e.g. He went to the races  
She was a blue-eyed beauty

**Dependent Clause:** is dependent for its understanding upon the independent clause. A dependent clause, when standing alone, is not a complete sentence.

e.g. while she was shopping  
when she was younger

### Exercise 1

Read the following clauses carefully and decide which are independent and which are dependent. In the space provided, write the letter 'I' if the clause is **independent** or 'D' if the clause is **dependent**.

1. the moon is blue \_\_\_\_\_
2. when the sun shone brightly \_\_\_\_\_
3. from her vantage point she realized \_\_\_\_\_
4. although the bluebirds have returned \_\_\_\_\_
5. from a distant hill he approached \_\_\_\_\_
6. after the train arrived \_\_\_\_\_

Independent clauses may be joined using a **comma**, plus a **conjunction**.

e.g. He tried his best, but he could not understand.  
          clause      conj.      clause

Common **conjunctions** are:

and            or            for            yet            but            also            so

## Exercise 2

Underline the independent clauses in the following sentences. Use a double underline to show the co-ordinate conjunction where applicable.

1. Tom went to the movies, but Janice went to the circus.
2. He was ordered to go to his room without supper, for he was behaving badly.
3. The sky was crystal blue.
4. From Atlantic to Pacific, Canada is a changing land.
5. The work was hard, but she enjoyed it.
6. He moved quickly out of the way, for he noticed the snake slithering toward him.

Dependent clauses can be introduced by either **subordinate conjunctions** or **relative pronouns**. Both the subordinate conjunction and the relative pronoun connect the dependent clause to the independent clause, but are used differently.

- **Subordinate conjunctions** answer the questions “how”, “when”, or “where”. They most often introduce the dependent clause when the clause is used as an adverb. If the adverb clause appears at the beginning of the sentence, it is followed by a comma.

e.g. (When) Terry drives, traffic scatters.

(subj. conj.) dep. clause ind. clause

e.g. They will go to the beach, (if) the weather is warm enough.

ind. clause (subj. conj.) dep. clause

Some common subordinate conjunctions are:

as	though	when	where	while
as soon as	although	whenever	wherever	if
as if	even though	since	before	after
as though	why	because	unless	until

- **Relative Pronouns** answer the questions “who”, “what”, “which”, and “that”. They describe nouns or pronouns and use commas to set off adjective clauses that are not necessary to the meaning of the sentence. If the adjective clause contains information necessary to the meaning of the sentence, no commas are needed.

e.g. John McKay, (who) lives across the street, is the local pharmacist.

ind. clause (rel. pro.) dep. clause ind clause

e.g. The elephant, (which) had a long ivory tusk, thundered toward us.

ind. clause (rel. pro.) dep. clause ind clause