

Clause structure review

Helpful for avoiding sentence fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences

We'll talk about...

| Clauses | Independent Clauses | Dependent Clauses |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Subjects | Verbs/Verb phrases | Problems, so you can avoid them and appear as smart as you are. |

Clause: A group of words

- Under the sea
- Eating lunch at noon
- Literary analysis is endlessly fascinating

Independent Clause: Has a subject and a verb, and expresses a complete thought

- Literary analysis is endlessly fascinating.
- Dill pickles taste better than sweet pickles.

Dependent clause: has a subject and a verb, BUT includes a word marking “I need another clause to make sense!”

When I’m forced to eat a sweet pickle

(“*When*” marks that there’s more information coming. When I’m forced to eat a sweet pickle, I’m vengeful.)

Again:

- independent clause
= subject + verb.
- No “dependent”
marker

SUBJECTS:

- Who or what the sentence is about
- Come first
- Noun or noun phrase (group of words)

If it fits in this blank...

People talk about _____.

...it's probably a noun phrase, and if it's at the beginning, it's the subject.

Subjects can be many, many words!

Subjects= Noun phrases=one or many words
“People talk about_____.”

| Pickles | Dill pickles |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| The difference between dill pickles and sweet pickles | Your favorite shoes |
| The day you'll graduate | The book on the shelf |
| Whatever she says | Cupcakes |
| The stuff on my desk | Everything green in the world |

Verbs/Verb phrases

- What the subject does or is, or what's happening.
- *Pickles come in several varieties*
- *Dill pickles taste better than sweet pickles.*
- *The difference between dill pickles and sweet pickles should not be minimized.*
- *Your favorite shoes fit well.*
- *The day you graduate will be joyful.*
- *The book on the shelf wants me to read it.*
- *Whatever she says makes sense*
- *Cupcakes delight most people who like sweets.*
- *The stuff on my desk needs straightening up.*

Verbs/Verb phrases

- **The action of the subject**, but not always an active-sounding word.

Is

Are

Might

Should

Will

May

and many other inactive-sounding words are verbs.

To find the subject...

- Do the “People talk about_____” test.
- To find the whole subject, put as much of the front of the sentence into the blank as you can.

The book on the shelf wants me to read it.

People talk about the book. YES

*People talk about the book on the. NO

People talk about the book on the shelf. YES

*People talk about the book on the shelf wants me to read it.
NO

To find the verb...

- Find the subject.
- Ask:

What about it? –or– What about them? –
or– what happens?

Example: Cupcakes delight most people who like sweets.

Subject: Cupcakes.

What about them? They delight most people who like sweets.

Note: “Like” is a verb but it isn’t the action of the sentence. It doesn’t answer a question about cupcakes.

SUBJECT+VERB=Independent clause

If you have a subject and a verb phrase for it, you have an independent clause.

So, it's a complete thought, and can be a complete sentence, unless there's a word that signals "I need another clause to make sense."

DEPENDENT CLAUSES

- Have a subject and verb, like an independent clause, but also have a word signaling that another clause is needed to complete the thought
- These words are called dependent markers, or subordinating conjunctions

DEPENDENT CLAUSES

If you see one of these words, it's probably beginning a dependent clause, and you'll need an independent clause to go with it.

| | | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|
| After | Although | As | As if | Because | Before |
| Even if | Even though | If | In order to | Since | Though |
| Unless | Until | When | Whenever | Whether | While |

Why care?

- Sentence fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences can be corrected using these ideas.
Yay!

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Sentence Fragments | May not have both a subject and verb May be a dependent clause on its own. |
| Comma Splices | Two independent clauses separated by only a comma |
| Run-on Sentences | Two or more independent clauses with no separation (no words, no punctuation) |

Some templates: dependent/independent

(Although...)* _____, _____.

_____, **and **** _____.

_____;
_____.

_____;
however, *** _____.

However***, _____.

*Although, As, As if, Because, Before, Even if, Even though, If, In order to, etc.

**for, nor, or yet so (FANBOYS)

***Moreover, Nevertheless, etc (see Purdue Owl handout)

If this is difficult...

- That's ok.
- You can make it easier by taking a few different steps.
 - **Come to the Writing Center** and we'll talk about it, practice it, whatever you need.
 - **Read a ton.** This makes it easier to recognize ungrammatical sentences, which makes it less likely you'll write one and appall your professor.
 - **Read a ton and sometimes re-read, actively thinking** about clause structure and trying to recognize subjects, verbs, independent clauses and dependent clauses.