

THE CLAUSE

Recognize a clause when you see one.

Clauses come in four types: main [or *independent*], subordinate [or *dependent*], relative [or *adjective*], and noun. Every clause has at least a subject and a verb. Other characteristics will help you distinguish one type of clause from another.

MAIN CLAUSES

Every main clause will follow this pattern:

SUBJECT + **VERB** = **Complete Thought**

Here are some examples:

Lazy students whine.

Students = subject; *whine* = verb.

Cola spilled over the glass and splashed onto the counter.

Cola = subject; *spilled, splashed* = verbs.

My dog loves pizza crusts.

Dog = subject; *loves* = verb.

The important point to remember is that every sentence must have at least one main clause. Otherwise, you have a fragment, a major error.

SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

A subordinate clause will follow this pattern:

Subordinate Conjunction + **Subject** + **Verb** = **Incomplete Thought**

Here are some examples:

Whenever lazy students whine

Whenever = subordinate conjunction; **students** = subject; **whine** = verb.

As cola spilled over the glass and splashed onto the counter

As = subordinate conjunction; **cola** = subject; **spilled, splashed** = verbs.

Because my dog loves pizza crusts

Because = subordinate conjunction; **dog** = subject; **loves** = verb.

The important point to remember about subordinate clauses is that they can never stand alone as complete sentences. To complete the thought, you must attach each subordinate clause to a main clause.

Generally, the punctuation looks like this:

Main Clause + \emptyset + **Subordinate Clause**

Subordinate Clause + , + **Main Clause**

Check out these revisions to the subordinate clauses above:

Whenever lazy students whine, Mrs. Russell throws chalk erasers at their heads.

Anthony ran for the paper towels *as cola spilled over the glass and splashed onto the counter*.

Because my dog loves pizza crusts, he never barks at the deliveryman.

Coordinate Conjunctions:

Subordinate Conjunctions: