

7. Clauses

A clause is two or more related words that work together that contain a subject **and** a verb. Compare this definition to that of a phrase. There are two types of clauses- independent (or main) clauses which can stand alone as a sentence, and dependant (or subordinate) clauses which can not stand alone as a complete sentence.

Because he was crazy (dependent clause- can not stand alone)

The monkey is rabid. (independent clause- can stand alone)

If I were married (dependent clause- can not stand alone)

I was married last year. (independent clause- can stand alone)

There are three kinds of dependent clauses:

Relative (adjectival) clauses

Adverb (adverbial) clauses

Noun clauses

A. **Relative (adjectival) clause**

This is a dependent clause that acts as an adjective- so it describes or gives more information about a noun or pronoun. A relative clause follows the noun or pronoun it modifies and begins with a relative pronoun (such as that, which, what, who, whose, whom) or a relative adverb (such as when, where, why).

This is the house **that I told you about**.

(adjective that gives more information about house)

The Super Scooper, **which I would recommend**, is far superior to the others.

(adjective that gives more information about the Super Scooper)

Maria, **who is in my class**, drinks coffee everyday.

(adjective that gives more information about Maria)

The student **whose books you have taken** will surely want them back.

(adjective that gives more information about student)

The person **whom she was speaking to** is my professor.

(adjective that gives more information about person)

My favorite month is always February, **when we celebrate Valentine's Day and Presidents' Day**.

(adjective that gives more information about February)

My entire family went to Harvard, **where my great grandfather used to be professor**.

(adjective that gives more information about Harvard)

Do you know the reason **why Isabel isn't in class today**?

(adjective that gives more information about reason)

There are two type of relative clauses- defining (restrictive) or non-defining (non-restrictive).

A **defining relative clause** (also called identifying relative clauses or restrictive relative clauses) gives detailed information defining a general term or expression that is essential to the understanding of the sentence. The purpose of a defining relative clause is to clearly define and identify exactly who or what we are talking about, **if there is more than one** person or thing.

The hotel **that we stayed in** wasn't bad.

(There are many hotels. The defining relative clause tells exactly which hotel we are talking about- the one we stayed in.)

Elephants **that love mice** are very unusual.

(There are many types of elephants; the defining relative clause tells us exactly which type of elephant is being referred to- elephants that love mice.)

This is the guy **who invented the bungee jump**.

(There are many guys. The defining relative clause tells us exactly which guy is being referred to- the one that invented bungee jumping.)

My sister **who lives in France** is coming to stay with me for a month.

(The person has more than one sister. The defining relative clause tells exactly which one is being talked about- the one that lives in France.)

A **non-defining relative** clause (also called non-identifying relative clauses or non-restrictive relative clauses) provides interesting ADDITIONAL information which is not essential to understanding the meaning of the sentence. A non-defining relative clause is used **if there is only one thing or person** being referred to (which does not have to be defined or identified because there is only one). It tells us more about someone or something, but does not define it.

The Grand Hotel, **which was right on the beach**, wasn't bad.

(There is only one Grand Hotel; it does not have to be defined or identified. The non-defining relative clause gives additional information about the hotel- that it is right on the beach.)

Elephants, **which are large and grey**, can sometimes be found in zoos.

(There is only one kind of animal called elephant and this sentence refers to all of them. The non-defining relative clause gives additional information about elephants- that they are large and grey.)

Jim Bungee, **who invented the bungee jump**, is now a very rich man.

(There is only one Jim Bungee; he does not have to be defined or identified. The non-defining relative clause gives additional information about him- that he is rich.)

My sister, **who lives in France**, is coming to stay with me for a month.

(This person has only one sister. The non-defining relative clause gives additional information about her.)

Note: Commas **are** used in non-defining relative clauses, but not defining relative clauses.

Note: You should not use the relative pronoun "that" in non-defining relative clauses.

B. Adverb (adverbial) Clause

An adverb clause is a dependent clause that starts with a subordinating conjunction (such as: before, since, because, when, and if). Adverb clauses function as adverbs and modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs in an independent clause. It tells when, where, why, how, how long, or how far.

An adverb clause can be placed before or after the independent clause. If it is placed before the independent clause, a comma must be used to separate the two clauses. No comma is needed if the adverb clause is placed after the independent clause.

Whenever I take the bus to class, I always arrive late.

I always arrive to class late **whenever I take the bus**.

Because Gina was so angry, she couldn't concentrate on her studies.
(adverb that answers the question why Gina couldn't concentrate)

After I finished the TEFL course, I landed a great job.
(adverb that answers the question when I got the job)

I left the party **before I drank too much**.
(adverb that answers the question when I left)

C. Noun Clause

A noun clause is a dependent clause that functions as a noun- and can be a subject, object, or subject complement of a sentence. These clauses usually begin with a relative pronoun (such as that, which, what, who, whose, whom) or how, why, when, if, or whether.

Whether you like grammar or not doesn't matter. (functions as subject)

He told her **that he was in bed**. (functions as object of told)

The problem was **that she left early**. (functions as subject complement)

To test your knowledge and comprehension of this section, complete Exercises 16 and 17 in the exercise book.