

## HELP



A subordinate clause that is capitalized and punctuated as a sentence is a **sentence fragment**.

## Reference Note

For information about **correcting sentence fragments**, see page 478.

## Reference Note

For a list of **coordinating conjunctions**, see page 78. For more about using **semicolons** and **conjunctive adverbs** to join independent clauses, see page 344.

## SKILLS FOCUS

Identify and use independent clauses. Identify and use subordinate clauses.

## What Is a Clause?

**4a. A clause is a word group that contains a verb and its subject and that is used as a sentence or as part of a sentence.**

Although every clause contains a subject and a verb, not every clause expresses a complete thought. Clauses that do are called **independent clauses**. Clauses that do not express a complete thought are called **subordinate clauses**.

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE	The people left the building
SUBORDINATE CLAUSE	when the fire alarm sounded
SENTENCE	When the fire alarm sounded, the people left the building.

## The Independent Clause

**4b. An independent (or main) clause expresses a complete thought and can stand by itself as a sentence.**

In the following examples, each boldface clause has its own subject and verb and expresses a complete thought.

**EXAMPLES**    **Ms. Santana works in a law office in downtown Concord.**

**Ms. Santana works in a law office** that has a view of downtown Concord.

**Ms. Santana works in a law office in downtown Concord,** and **she has a successful practice.**

In the last example, the independent clauses are joined by a comma and the coordinating conjunction *and*. The clauses also could be written with a semicolon between them:

Ms. Santana works in a law office in downtown Concord;  
she has a successful practice.

or with a semicolon, a conjunctive adverb, and a comma:

Ms. Santana works in a law office in downtown Concord;  
**indeed,** she has a successful practice.

or as separate sentences:

Ms. Santana works in a law office in downtown Concord.  
She has a successful practice.

# The Subordinate Clause

**4c. A subordinate (or dependent) clause does not express a complete thought and cannot stand by itself as a sentence.**

Words such as *when*, *whom*, *because*, *which*, *that*, *if*, and *until* signal that the clauses following them are likely to be subordinate. *Subordinate* means “lesser in rank or importance.” To make a complete sentence, a subordinate clause must be joined to an independent clause. Like phrases, subordinate clauses can be used as adjectives, adverbs, or nouns.

**SUBORDINATE CLAUSES** when you arrive at the airport in Dallas  
which grow only locally  
that he had granted us an interview

**SENTENCES** **When you arrive at the airport in Dallas**, call us.  
These wildflowers, **which grow only locally**,  
are of interest to scientists.  
Did you know **that he had granted us an interview**?

As the preceding examples show, subordinate clauses may appear at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a sentence. The placement of a subordinate clause depends on how the clause is used in the sentence.

**NOTE** Many subordinate clauses contain complements (such as predicate nominatives, predicate adjectives, direct objects, or indirect objects), modifiers, or both.

**EXAMPLES** **what** it is . . . [*What is a predicate nominative: It is what?*]  
because you look **tired** . . . [*Tired is a predicate adjective modifying you.*]  
**that** you chose . . . [*That is the direct object of chose.*]  
before he gave **us** the **quiz** . . . [*Us is the indirect object of gave; quiz is the direct object of gave.*]  
that I bought **yesterday** . . . [*Yesterday is an adverb modifying bought.*]  
when the coach was calling **to her** . . . [*To her is an adverb phrase modifying was calling.*]

## Reference Note

For more about **sentence complements**, see page 101. For more information on **modifiers**, see Chapter 8.

## SKILLS FOCUS

Identify and use adjective clauses.

## Think as a Reader/Writer

Although short, simple sentences can be effective, a variety of sentence structures is usually more effective. To make choppy sentences into smoother writing, combine shorter sentences by changing some into subordinate clauses. Also, avoid unnecessary repetition of subjects, verbs, and pronouns.

### CHOPPY

I enjoy feta cheese. It comes from Greece. It is traditionally made from sheep's or goat's milk.

### SMOOTH

I enjoy feta cheese, which comes from Greece and is traditionally made from sheep's or goat's milk.

In the example above, two of the short sentences are combined into a single subordinate clause.

## Exercise 1 Identifying Independent and Subordinate Clauses

For each of the following sentences, identify the clause in italics as *independent* or *subordinate*.

**EXAMPLE** 1. *When you think of baseball*, you may think of lightning-fast pitches, bat-splitting home runs, or secret hand signals from coaches and catchers.

1. *subordinate*

1. *Baseball is a game* that generally depends on good eyesight as well as athletic skill.
2. For this reason, until recently, playing the great American game has been something *that people with visual impairments found virtually impossible*.
3. Only sighted players could participate *until an engineer named Charley Fairbanks invented beep baseball*.
4. *In this version of baseball*, the ball beeps and the bases buzz so that players like the one pictured here can tell when to swing and where to run.
5. Each team has a sighted pitcher and a sighted catcher, *who never get a turn at bat*, and six fielders who wear blindfolds so that they don't have a visual advantage.
6. The pitcher shouts "Ready!" *before the ball is pitched* and "Pitch!" when the ball is released.

7. When the bat strikes the ball, the umpire activates the buzzer in first base, *to which the batter must then run*.

8. When a team is on defense, the pitcher and catcher cannot field the batted ball themselves; *they can only shout directions to the fielders*.

9. *Beep baseball is fun to play*, and its challenges create a bond between sighted players and players with visual impairments.

10. Sighted players *who put on blindfolds and join in* come away from a game with a new respect for the abilities of their visually impaired teammates.

