

# Phrases, Clauses, and Sentences

## Phrase

A phrase is a group of words working together.

Some examples of phrases are:

- in the office -- This is a prepositional phrase. (The meeting will be in the office.)
- pick up -- This is a phrasal verb. (He picked up some food at the store.)
- a friendly dog -- This is a noun phrase. (My friend has a friendly dog.)

## Clause

A clause is a group of words working together with a subject and a verb showing time (or tense).

Some examples of clauses are:

- I went to the park yesterday. (Independent Clause)
- I went to the park yesterday to enjoy the sunshine. (Independent Clause)
- because the shoes didn't fit (Dependent or Subordinate Adverb Clause of Reason)
- Please pass me the salt. (Independent Clause using the Imperative Mood -- a Command)

## Sentence

A sentence is a complete thought. It begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, and always has at least one independent clause.

- My computer crashed yesterday.  
(One Independent Clause -- a Simple Sentence)
- When the computer service man arrived, he discovered I had accidentally pulled the plug.  
(One Independent Clause and one Dependent Clause -- a Compound Sentence.)
- He plugged my computer in, and it worked fine.  
(Two Independent Clauses -- a Compound Sentence)

## Kinds of Clauses

The type of clause depends on its completeness and its function in the sentence.

- We had dinner.  
(Independent Clause)
- after my friend arrived  
(Dependent Adverb Clause of Time)
- My friend arrived late, but it was not a problem.  
(Two Independent Clauses joined by the co-coordinating conjunction "but".)
- After my friend arrived, we had dinner.  
(An Adverb Clause of Time and an Independent Clause)

(over)

# Phrases, Clauses, and Sentences

## Types of Sentences

A **simple sentence** has only one clause. This clause, by definition, must be an independent (or principle or main) clause.

- I went to the park yesterday.

A **compound sentence** has two independent (or more) clauses joined by one of the “fanboys” – the co-coordinating conjunctions "for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so". A semi-colon (;) can also join two main clauses to form a compound sentence; this sentence is an example.

- My friend arrived late, but it was not a problem.

A **complex sentence** has at least one independent clause and at least one dependent (or subordinate) clause.

- After my friend arrived, we had dinner.

Sometimes when a complex sentence has two independent clauses as well as one or more independent clauses, it is called a **compound-complex sentence**.

- After my friend had arrived, we had dinner, and then we went to a movie.

An Independent Clause stands on its own – it is a complete thought. By itself, it is a simple sentence; in a compound sentence, there are two independent clauses joined by one of the "FANBOYS" -- "and", "or", "but" and so on (or a semi-colon).

Dependent clauses cannot stand on its own. They need an Independent clause to make a complete thought. A dependent clause can be an adjective clause, an adverb clause, or a noun clause.

## Notes:

**Every sentence must have at least one independent clause.**

**Transitions or conjunctive adverbs, like "however" or "in addition", join or link ideas, but they do not grammatically join clauses within a sentence.**

### Incorrect:

- "It is raining, however, I am going to go for a walk in the park"  
(This is a comma slice or run-on sentence.)

### Correct:

- It is raining; however, I am going to go for a walk in the park. (semi-colon)
- It is raining. However, I am going to go for a walk in the park (Two Sentences)

## Paragraphs

A paragraph is a group of sentences supporting one idea. The main idea is introduced in the topic sentence, and the other sentences give supporting details. The topic sentence contains the most important or the broadest idea, statement, concept, or question. All the other sentences in the paragraph explain, add ideas, or support this main idea. The topic sentence in student writing should usually be the first sentence in the paragraph.