

A clause is a group of words that includes a subject and a verb and comes in two varieties: independent and dependent or subordinate. An **independent clause** contains a subject and a predicate (the verb and its modifiers) and can function as a complete sentence. A **dependent or subordinate clause** also contains a subject and a predicate, but it cannot stand alone as a complete sentence and needs to be attached to an independent clause. A dependent or subordinate clause is introduced by a subordinating conjunction and functions within a sentence as an adjective, adverb, or noun.

An adjective or relative clause begins with a relative pronoun (**who, whom, whose, which, or that**) or a relative adverb (**when, where, or why**) and modifies a noun or pronoun. An adverb clause modifies a verb, an adjective, or an adverb and begins with a subordinating conjunction such as **after, although, because, if, even though, unless, or when**. A noun clause functions like a noun in a sentence and usually begins with a relative pronoun or subordinating word such as **how, if, when, whenever, where, wherever, whether, or why**. A sentence can contain any number of dependent clauses, but it must always have at least one independent clause in order to be complete.

## **TYPES OF SENTENCES**

Depending on the number and types of clauses they contain, sentences are classified as **simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex**. Clauses can be connected to form sentences by coordination, using a coordinating conjunction to connect two independent clauses, and by subordination, using a subordinating conjunction to attach a dependent clause to an independent clause.

### **Simple Sentences**

A simple sentence is an independent clause with no subordinate clauses, e.g., “My sister is a talented musician.” In this sentence, the word “**sister**” is the subject followed by the verb “**is**” and the subject complement “**a talented musician**.” A simple sentence may also contain compound elements such as a compound subject, verb, or object.

My **sister** and **brother** are both talented musicians.  
My sister **is** a talented musician and **sings** in the chorus.  
My sister is **a talented musician** and **a good student**.

### **Compound Sentences**

A compound sentence is composed of two or more independent clauses that are usually joined with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (**for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**) or with a semicolon.

My sister is a talented musician, **but** she doesn't like to practice.  
We will review the chapter on Wednesday, **and** the exam will be next week.  
We will review the chapter on Wednesday; the exam will be next week.

In the sentence above, since the semicolon is not end punctuation, the second clause (“**the exam will be next week.**”) does not begin with a capital letter. This is also the case when using a semicolon and a transitional expression such as **however, consequently, as a result, or in addition**, e.g., “My sister is a talented musician; **however**, she doesn't like to practice.”

## Complex Sentences

A complex sentence is composed of an independent clause and one or more dependent or subordinate clauses, which may come before or after the independent clause.

When a dependent clause comes before the independent clause, a comma is placed after the dependent clause.

**If we are not going to the restaurant**, we need to cancel our reservation.  
**Since the weather is so nice**, we should go to the park.  
**Because you have a long commute**, you should leave after the meeting.

When the independent clause comes before the dependent clause, no punctuation is required to combine the clauses in the same sentence.

The instructor reviewed the directions **before she passed out the questionnaire**.  
We were disappointed **that we lost the competition**.  
The auction was a success **because we raised more money than we expected**.

## Compound-Complex Sentences

A compound-complex sentence contains at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent or subordinate clause.

When the package finally arrived, after a delay of more than two weeks, she was anxious to open it, but she decided to wait until we could share the experience with her.

The sentence above begins with a dependent clause (**When the package finally arrived**), followed by another dependent clause (**after a delay of more than two weeks**), then an independent clause (**she was anxious to open it**), which is joined to another independent clause with a comma and a coordinating conjunction “**but**,” forming a compound-complex sentence.