

PHRASES, CLAUSES AND SENTENCE TYPES

Phrases, Clauses and Sentence Types

Phrase	Clause
A group of words <i>without</i> a finite verb.	A group of words <i>with</i> a subject and a finite verb.
Does not make complete sense on its own.	Can sometimes make complete sense on its own.
Example: <i>in the morning under the dark table</i>	Example: <i>The bell rang / Because it was raining</i>

PHRASES

- Definition: A phrase is a group of words that does not contain a finite verb. It operates as a single part of speech in a sentence.
- How a Phrase Differs from a Clause: A phrase has no finite verb (e.g., "*The yellow car*"), whereas a clause must contain a finite verb (e.g., "*The yellow car crashed*")
- Noun Phrase: Acts as a noun and can serve as the subject or object of a sentence.
- Adjectival Phrase: Expands sentences by describing or modifying a noun.
- Adverbial Phrase: Expands sentences by showing when, where, why, or how an action takes place.

How To Identify a Phrase

- Check if the group of words has a finite verb. If there is no finite verb, it is a phrase.
- Identify the "head" of the phrase to determine its function (e.g., if it tells you *where* or *when* an action occurs, it is an adverbial phrase).

- *Noun Phrase (Subject)*: "The tall, strong policeman arrested the robbers."
- *Adverbial Phrase (Place)*: "The books are on the table." / "My sister fell asleep in the garden."
- *Adjectival Phrase*: "The house with a red roof is beautiful."

CLAUSES

- Clauses are split into two teams: **Independent (Main)** and **Dependent (Subordinate)**.
- Think of the **Main Clause** as a fully grown adult—it is independent and can stand alone. '*I missed the bus.*' Clear, direct, complete thought.
- The **Subordinate Clause** is like a toddler—it depends on the main clause to make sense. It usually starts with a joining word like *because, since, or although*. If I walk into the classroom and just say, '*Because I woke up late,*' and then sit down in silence, you will all look at me confused. It needs the main clause to hold it up: '*I missed the bus because I woke up late.*'"
- **Definition**: A clause is a **group of words that contains a finite verb**.
- **Independent / Main Clause**:
 - *Definition*: A clause that expresses a complete thought and **can stand alone** as a complete sentence.
 - *Example*: "**Miriam Makeba spent many years in exile...**"

Dependent / Subordinate Clause

- *Definition*: A clause that **cannot stand alone** as a sentence because it does not express a complete thought. It relies on the main clause to complete its meaning and often begins with a subordinating conjunction or relative pronoun
- *Example*: "**...who was one of the greatest performers South Africa has ever produced...**"

How To Identify Each One

- **Main Clause**:
- Temporarily remove all other parts of the sentence. If the remaining words form a logical, grammatically correct sentence that makes complete sense on its own, it is a main clause.

- **Dependent Clause:**
- Look for the presence of a linking word or subordinating conjunction (*because, although, when, if*) at the beginning of the clause. If reading the clause on its own leaves you waiting for more information, it is dependent.

Independent and Dependent Clauses

- **Main (Independent) Clause:** The boss. It can stand alone as a complete sentence because it makes full sense.
- **Subordinate (Dependent) Clause:** The assistant. It starts with a **subordinating conjunction** (e.g., *because, although, if, while*). It cannot stand alone.
- **Main:** *We ate lunch.* (Makes total sense)
- **Subordinate:** *...because we were hungry.* (Incomplete on its own!)

Phrase vs. Clause

- Learners frequently confuse **dependent clauses** with **phrases** because neither can stand alone as a sentence.
- *The key distinction:* A dependent clause contains a **finite verb** ("**when the fire broke out**" contains the finite verb *broke*), whereas a phrase does **not** have a finite verb ("**in the middle of the night**" contains nouns and prepositions but no verb).

The 4 Core Sentence Types

Sentence Type	Formula / Structure	Example
1. Simple	Main Clause	The boy kicked the soccer ball.
2. Compound	Main Clause + Coordinating Conjunction + Main Clause	The boy kicked the ball and it went into the net.
3. Complex	Main Clause + 1 (or more) Subordinate Clauses	The boy kicked the ball because he wanted to score.
4. Compound-Complex	2+ Main Clauses + 1+ Subordinate Clause	The boy kicked the ball because he wanted to score and the crowd cheered.

This is where we put it all together to create sentence types.

- First up is the **Simple Sentence**. Do not let the name fool you; it just means it has **one main clause** with one finite verb. *'The school bell rang.'* One action, one thought.
- Next is the **Compound Sentence**. This joins **two equal main clauses** using a coordinating conjunction. Remember the acronym **FANBOYS** (*For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So*). *'The bell rang, **and** the learners packed up.'* Both sides of that *'and'* could be their own separate sentences.
- Third is the **Complex Sentence**. This blends **one main clause with a subordinate clause**. *'The learners packed up **as soon as** the bell rang.'*

- Finally, the heavyweight champion: the **Compound-Complex Sentence**. This has at least **two main clauses** joined by a FANBOYS word, plus at least **one subordinate clause** tagged on. Look at the example on the board—see how it builds a rich, detailed picture?"

Simple Sentence

- **Definition:** A sentence that contains **only one main (independent) clause** with a single finite verb expressing a complete thought.
- **Structure:** Subject + Verb + Object (S-V-O) or Subject + Verb (S-V). No conjunctions are used to join clauses.
- **Examples:**
 - The policeman arrested the robbers.
 - He bought a pair of running shoes.
- **Common Mistakes:** Writing "sentences" that lack a finite verb (sentence fragments/incomplete sentences), or confusing a long noun phrase with a complete sentence

Compound Sentence

- **Definition:** A sentence containing **two or more independent (main) clauses** of equal grammatical weight, joined by a coordinating conjunction.
- **Structure:** Main Clause + Coordinating Conjunction + Main Clause.
- **Examples:**
 - "The mother loved her child dearly, **but** poverty forced her to give the child up for adoption."
 - "Sipho travels to school by taxi, **so** he is looking for a Saturday job."
- **Conjunctions Used:** Coordinating conjunctions: *and, but, nor, or, so, then, yet*.
- **Common Mistakes:** The **comma-splice error** (joining two main clauses with only a comma instead of a coordinating conjunction, semicolon, or full stop)

Complex Sentence

- **Definition:** A sentence containing **one main (independent) clause and at least one dependent (subordinate) clause**.
- **Structure:** Main Clause + Dependent Clause **OR** Dependent Clause + Comma + Main Clause.
- **Examples:**
 - He went home **because** he had forgotten his keys.
 - **If** you stop eating junk food, your health will improve.
 - The team **that** won the race in record time has been training hard.

Conjunctions/Linking Words

- **Conjunctions/Linking Words:** Subordinating conjunctions (*because, although, when, if, after, since, unless, while, before*) and relative pronouns (*who, which, that, whose, where*).
- **Common Mistakes:** Omitting the comma when the dependent clause begins the sentence, or incorrectly separating a relative clause from its main subject with misplaced punctuation.

SENTENCE DEVELOPMENT

- **Start with a basic Simple Sentence:**
 - *The children felt sick.*
- **Develop it into a stronger Simple Sentence (using phrases for expansion):**
 - *The **unhappy** children felt **terribly** sick **after the birthday party**.*
 - *Teacher Note:* Emphasize that despite adding adjectives, adverbs, and a prepositional phrase, this remains a simple sentence because it still contains **only one finite verb** (*felt*).
- **Develop it into a Compound Sentence (joining equal ideas):**
 - *The children ate too much cake at the party, **so** they felt sick.*

- Two independent clauses joined by the coordinating conjunction *so*.
- **Develop it into a Complex Sentence (showing a time or causal relationship):**
 - ***After** the children ate a lot of cake at the party, they felt sick.*
 - "*After the children ate a lot of cake at the party*" is now a dependent time clause that cannot stand alone

Subordinating Conjunctions (Complex Sentences)

- **because:** Explains the reason/cause. ("*He went home **because** he had forgotten his keys.*")
- **although / though:** Expresses concession or unexpected contrast. ("*The organisers expect many people to attend **although** the tickets are expensive.*")
- **when:** Establishes a specific point in time. ("*The family were sleeping **when** the fire broke out.*")
- **while:** Establishes simultaneous actions or concession. ("*She watched television **while** her brother studied.*")
- **if:** Introduces a real or hypothetical condition. ("***If** it rains, we will cancel the trip.*")
- **unless:** Introduces a negative condition (*if not*). ("*You will not get fit **unless** you exercise every day.*")
- **before / after:** Establish chronological sequence. ("***After** they ate a lot of cake, the children felt sick.*")
- **since:** Signals a point in time or introduces a logical reason. ("*I have lived in Durban **since** I was a child.*")

COMMON ERRORS

- **The Comma-Splice:**
 - *Error:* Joining two main (independent) clauses with only a comma, creating a run-on sentence.

- *Incorrect: "The boy ran onto the field with great enthusiasm, this was his defining moment."*
- *Correct: "The boy ran onto the field with great enthusiasm. This was his defining moment."*

Dangling Participle

- *Error: A sentence beginning with a participle phrase that does not logically attach to the subject that follows it.*
- *Incorrect: "Speeding down the hallway the door to his Maths class came into view." (Literally means the door was speeding).*
- *Correct: "As Jabu was speeding down the hallway, the door to his Maths class came into view."*

Run-On Sentences

- *Error: A total lack of punctuation that leads to long, rambling sentences where meaning is completely lost.*
- *Incorrect: "Sipho walk to school the taxi fares is high he wants to get a job so he can afford it."*
- *Correct: "Sipho walks to school. The taxi fares are high, so he wants to get a job to afford them."*

Inappropriate Sentence-Starting Conjunctions

- *Error: Starting academic or formal sentences with coordinating conjunctions like "but" or "because".*
- *Incorrect: "Because the taxi fares is high." (This is a dependent clause fragment).*
- *Correct: "Sipho walked to school because the taxi fares were high."*

Activities

Activity 1: Phrase or Clause?

Instruction: Write P for phrase and C for clause.

1. under the old bridge
2. because she was tired
3. the tall boy
4. when the bell rang
5. after the examination
6. the learners completed their work
7. in the school library
8. although it was raining
9. running across the field
10. they played soccer

Activity 2: Identify the Clause

Instruction: Underline the **clause** in each sentence.

1. The learners went home after the teacher dismissed them.
2. Because it was raining, the match was cancelled.
3. We will start the lesson when everyone is ready.
4. Although she was nervous, she gave an excellent speech.
5. The boy smiled because he had passed the test.

Activity 3: Find the Phrase

Instruction: Underline the phrase in each sentence.

1. The girl with the red bag is my friend.
2. The learners waited outside the classroom.
3. He completed the task with great confidence.
4. We saw a bird in the tall tree.
5. The teacher marked the books after school.

Activity 4: Complete the Sentence

Instruction: Complete each sentence by using a phrase or a clause.

1. The learners were excited _____.
2. _____, we continued with the lesson.
3. She stayed at home _____.
4. The boy _____ won the competition.

Activity 5: Build a Sentence

Instruction: Combine the words into a meaningful sentence.

A. Use the phrase:

in the school hall

Example:

The learners gathered **in the school hall**.

Now create sentences using:

1. after the examination
2. with great excitement
3. near the sports field
4. during the school holidays

B. Use the clause:

1. because she studied hard
2. when the teacher arrived
3. although he was nervous
4. because they missed the bus

Activity 6: Join the Ideas

Instruction: Join each pair of sentences using the clause starter in brackets.

1. Thabo was tired. He continued studying.
(although)
2. The learners were late. They missed the bus.
(because)
3. We will start the test. The teacher arrives.
(when)
4. She practised every day. She wanted to improve.
(because)
5. It was raining. The learners continued playing.
(although)

Memorandum

Activity 1: Phrase or Clause?

1. P
2. C
3. P
4. C
5. P
6. C
7. P
8. C
9. P
10. C

Activity 2: Identify the Clause

1. The learners went home **after the teacher dismissed them**.
2. **Because it was raining**, the match was cancelled.
3. We will start the lesson **when everyone is ready**.
4. **Although she was nervous**, she gave an excellent speech.
5. The boy smiled **because he had passed the test**.

Activity 3: Find the Phrase

1. The girl **with the red bag** is my friend.
2. The learners waited **outside the classroom**.
3. He completed the task **with great confidence**.
4. We saw a bird **in the tall tree**.
5. The teacher marked the books **after school**.

Activity 4: Complete the Sentence

Examples:

1. because they were going on a trip
2. After break
3. because she was sick
4. with the blue shirt

Activity 5: Build a Sentence

Own answers.

Activity 6: Join the Ideas

1. Although Thabo was tired, he continued studying.
2. The learners were late because they missed the bus.
3. We will start the test when the teacher arrives.
4. She practised every day because she wanted to improve.
5. Although it was raining, the learners continued playing.