



Clauses: A Very Brief Introduction

If you know the different types of clauses, you can better understand and refine sentence structure and will understand punctuation rules better as well.

Independent clauses can stand alone as complete sentences because independent clauses have a subject and a predicate/verb.

Dependent clauses need to be joined to an independent clause in order to create a complete sentence. When searching for dependent clauses, check for clauses beginning with prepositions or words such as *when*, *while*, *although*, *even though*, etc.

Also know there are two types of dependent clauses: **essential/restrictive/necessary** or **non-essential/nonrestrictive/unnecessary**.

The type of dependent clause dictates how to use punctuation. Essential clauses are not marked off with commas because the information within them is pertinent to the sentence's meaning. In contrast, nonessential clauses add information that is not highly essential to the main point of the sentence, and so they are marked off with commas.

See the following examples:

- Sunflowers, **which are my favorite flower**, are very drought tolerant.
- Please repair all the doors **that will not lock**.
- People **who speak multiple languages** are fortunate.
- Addison, **who is a student majoring in Chemistry**, has plans to get an internship.

Note:

- If a sentence begins with a dependent clause, you'll need to use a comma between the dependent clause and the independent clause. For an example, check out how this sentence and the previous one.
- Semi-colons can join two independent clauses; this punctuation option can also help with sentence variety.

