Independent and Dependent Clauses

A clause is a group of words that contains a **subject** (a noun or noun phrase) and a **predicate** (a simple verb or compound verb phrase, along with any objects complementing the verb). Clauses are of two types: independent and dependent. The first type is also known as a main clause; the second type is also known as a subordinate or relative clause.

- **Recognizing independent clauses**
  An independent clause can stand alone as a complete sentence. This kind of clause cannot begin with a subordinating conjunction, such as after, although, as, because, before, even though, if, once, since, so that, though, unless, until, when, whenever, where, wherever, whether, or while. Neither can an independent clause begin with a relative pronoun, such as who, which, that, what, whomever, and so on. An independent clause does not have to be joined to a dependent clause to make sense; it is sufficient unto itself.

  • **Ex:** *A band of musicians entertained a crowd of tourists in City Market.*

- **Recognizing dependent clauses**
  Even though it contains a subject and a predicate, a dependent clause cannot stand alone as a sentence. This kind of clause usually begins with a word indicating that it must be linked to an independent clause in order to make sense.

  Dependent clauses that begin with subordinating conjunctions are **subordinate** clauses. Subordinate clauses function as adverbs. They modify verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and even whole main clauses. Such clauses usually answer questions like how?, why?, where?, or under what conditions? When an adverb clause precedes an independent clause, the clauses must be separated with a comma.

  • **Ex:** *While waiters served cold beer in plastic cups, a band of musicians entertained a crowd of tourists in City Market.*

  Dependent clauses that begin with relative pronouns are **relative** clauses. Relative clauses function as adjectives. They modify nouns, noun phrases, and pronouns. The word at the beginning of a relative clause refers to and modifies a noun-antecedent somewhere else in the sentence.

  • **Ex:** *While waiters served cold beer in plastic cups, a band of musicians that had been brought in from Atlanta entertained a crowd of tourists in City Market.*
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Following are some examples of clauses. Underline main clauses with one line, subordinate clauses with two lines, and relative clauses with three lines.

1. While the core teaching, research and scholarship, and service functions differ by institutional type, the campus life of every institution in the University System of Georgia will be characterized by a supportive campus climate.

2. Armstrong Atlantic State University offers a commitment to excellence and responsiveness within a scope of influence defined by the needs of an area of the state, and particularly outstanding programs or distinctive characteristics that have a magnet effect throughout the state.

3. Students enrolled in at least six hours at Savannah State University or at Armstrong Atlantic State University have the privilege of taking courses at the other university without paying an additional fee.

4. Students enrolled at Armstrong Atlantic State University who are majoring in business education may take more than half of their courses at Savannah State.

5. Transient students are admitted for one semester. If they wish to remain at Armstrong Atlantic longer than one semester, they must submit a new letter of good standing or meet all transfer requirements for transfer students.

6. For fall semester 1999, applicants who pass the basic group of tests plus two additional SAT II subject tests will be eligible for admission to the university if all other freshman admission requirements are met.

7. The requirements for early admission are the same as those listed for the joint enrollment program.

8. It is recommended that international students begin their attendance at the university in the fall semester.