Clauses

There are two main types of clauses a sentence can have: independent and dependent.

Independent Clauses

Independent clauses have a subject and a verb and can stand alone. They make sense by themselves without additional information or clauses.

Example: Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz.

This is an independent clause because it has both a subject (Jim) and a verb (studied), and it can stand alone without the aid of another clause.

Example: I ran.

While short, this is also an independent clause because it has a subject (I) and verb (ran) and can stand alone without the aid of another clause.

Dependent Clauses

Dependent clauses also contain a subject and verb, but they cannot stand alone. They require additional information to make sense.

Example: When Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz . . .

What happened when he studied? The thought is incomplete.

Subordinating Conjunctions

Dependent clauses are indicated by the marker words called subordinating conjunctions that start them. Some common marker words are the following: after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, if, to, since, though, unless, until, whatever, when, whenever, whether, and while.

Joining Clauses

Dependent clauses can be added to a sentence using a comma, and multiple dependent clauses can be added to a single independent clause. However, joining two independent clauses requires specific methods.

Coordinating Conjunctions

Remember the coordinating conjunctions with the acronym FANBOYS: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So. Put one of these words at the beginning of an independent clause to connect it to an independent clause that comes before it.

Example: It's nice out right now, but it might get cold later.

Note: When connecting two independent clauses, you must place a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

Semicolons

Independent clauses can also be connected with a semicolon. The semicolon is a punctuation mark that indicates that two complete thoughts are related by topic. Semicolons function in much the same way that coordinating conjunctions do.

> **Example:** It's nice out right now**;** it might get cold later.

Semicolons can also be used in a list that contains commas to help add a sense of clarity. In this context, the semicolon supersedes the commas to break apart the list.

> **Example:** I bought shiny, red apples**;** firm, ripe green pears**;** and sweet juicy grapes.

Using a variety of independent and dependent clauses in a sentence can add variety and detail to a piece of writing.

Need more information or assistance?

Schedule an appointment with the [Excel Multiliteracy Center](). We are here to provide one-on-one and group assistance to any and all UCCS students!