DEPENDENT CLAUSES

Dependent clauses (also called subordinate clauses) do not stand alone. They rely on independent clauses for their meaning. Any clause beginning with a subordinating word, like *what, that, who, which, when, since, before, after or if,* is a dependent clause. A dependent clause can be found anywhere in a sentence – at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end – but it can never stand alone.

When I went to school, *I studied my lessons.*
The dependent clause beginning with "when" begins the sentence.

Much time had elapsed **before he became a success.**
The dependent clause beginning with "before" ends the sentence.

Bob Jones, **who became a famous musician,** *played in my high school band.*
The dependent clause beginning with "who" is in the middle of the sentence.

The dependent clauses *"when I went to school," "before he became a success,"* and *"who became a famous musician"* are dependent upon the independent clauses to complete their meanings. Dependent clauses function as grammatical units in a sentence; they may function as nouns, adjectives, and adverbs.

NOUN CLAUSES

A noun clause is a dependent clause which functions as a noun. It can play every role that a noun can play: that is, it can be used as a subject, complement, or object of preposition in a sentence. Noun clauses are usually introduced by *that, what, why, whether, who, which, how, whoever* or *whatever*. Some of these introductory words can introduce both noun clauses and adjective clauses, since the manner in which the clause is used in the sentence and not its introductory word, determines its classification. Most sentences containing noun clauses differ from those containing adjective and adverbial clauses in that, with the clause removed, they are no longer complete sentences.

What you intend to do *is interesting.*
Without the noun clause, "what you intend to do" the sentence no longer has a subject.

I am interested in **what you intend to do.**
When the noun clause, which is the object of the preposition *in*, is removed, the sentence is incomplete.

ADJECTIVE CLAUSES

An adjective clause is a dependent clause which modifies (or describes) a noun or pronoun. The common connective words used to introduce adjective clauses are the relative pronouns who (whom and whose), which, that, and relative adverbs like where and when (where and when can introduce all three kinds of clauses).

The bold clauses in the following sentences are all adjective clauses:

He is a man **who is respected by everyone***.*

Mr. Jones, **whose son attends the University***, is our friend.*

It was a time **when money did not count***.*

Adjective clauses are classified as essential (restrictive) and nonessential (nonrestrictive). An essential clause, as its name implies, is necessary in a sentence because it identifies or point out a certain person or thing; a nonessential clause adds information about the word it modifies, but it is not necessary in pointing out or identifying a certain person or thing.

Thomas Jefferson, **who was born on the frontier,** *became President.*
The name Thomas Jefferson has identified the person, and the bold clause is not essential.

*A person **who loves to read** will never be lonely.*
The bold adjective clause is essential in identifying a particular type of person.

*My father, **who was a country boy,** has made a success of his life.*
Since a person has only one father, the identifying clause is not essential.

*The girl by **whom he sat in class** is an honor student.*
The bold adjective clause is essential to identification of the specific girl.

To determine whether an adjective clause is essential, apply this test:

1. Read the sentence, leaving out the adjective clause

2. Determine if the omission changes the meaning of the sentence

Try the test on the following sentences:

*Airplanes, **which are now manufactured in great numbers,** were very necessary during the war.*
Removing the adjective clause introduced by the relative pronoun *"which"* does NOT change the meaning of the sentence; it is nonessential.

*Airplanes **which are not carefully inspected** should never be flown.*
Removing the adjective clause introduced by *"which"* changes the sentence meaning.

ADVERBIAL CLAUSES

An adverbial clause is a dependent clause which modifies (or describes) a verb, an adjective, or an adverb. It is used to show time, place, cause, purpose, result, condition, concession, manner or comparison and is introduced by a subordinating conjunction. Common subordinating conjunctions which introduce adverbial clauses, with their functions, are listed below.

1. Time – *when, before, since, as, until, while, after, whenever*

2. Place – *where, wherever*

3. Cause – *because, since, as*

4. Propose – *in order that, so that, that*

5. Result – *so…that, such…that*

6. Condition – *if, unless*

7. Manner – *as, as if, as though*

8. Comparison – *as, than*

Adverbial clauses, like adjective clauses, are either essential or nonessential. The same test that was applied to adjective clauses may be applied to adverbial clauses.

Punctuation of Adverbial Clauses

1. All nonessential adverbial clauses are set off by commas.
   *My home, **where I find peace and quiet,** is important to me.*

2. Introductory adverbial clauses, however, are set off by commas even when they are essential clauses.
   ***Since you plan to arrive early,** please unlock the door.*