



What is a Clause in a Sentence?

KS2 ENGLISH

GRAMMAR

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Ages 10-12 ⌚ 3 min read

What Exactly is a Clause?

A **clause** is a group of words that contains a **verb** and usually a **subject** (the person or thing doing the action). Clauses are the building blocks that make up sentences. Think of them like LEGO bricks — you can use one brick to make something simple, or join multiple bricks together to create something more complicated.

Think of it like a sentence being built from puzzle pieces. A clause is one of those puzzle pieces that has both a picture (the subject) and an action (the verb). When you snap puzzle pieces together, you get the complete picture, just like when you combine clauses, you get a complete sentence.

Two Types of Clauses

There are two main types of clauses: **main clauses** and **subordinate clauses**. A **main clause** (also called an **independent clause**) can stand alone as a complete sentence because it makes complete sense by itself. For example: "The dog ran through the park." This is a complete thought.

A **subordinate clause** (also called a **dependent clause**) cannot stand alone. It needs a main clause to make sense. For example: "Because it was sunny" doesn't make complete sense on its own. But if you add a main clause, it works: "Because it was sunny, the dog ran through the park."

Think of it like a main clause is a sentence that can survive on its own, like a tree that can grow without help. A subordinate clause is like a vine that needs to wrap around the tree to have meaning — it depends on the tree to make sense.

How Clauses Help Us Write Better

Understanding clauses helps you write more interesting and detailed sentences. Instead of writing lots of short, choppy sentences, you can join clauses together using **conjunctions** (linking words like "and," "but," "because," "while," and "if"). This makes your writing flow better and sound more grown-up.

For example, instead of writing "I went to the shop. I bought an apple. I felt happy," you could combine these ideas: "I went to the shop and bought an apple, which made me feel happy." Notice how this uses multiple clauses joined together? The result is smoother and more professional-sounding writing.

Quick Checklist

When you're trying to spot a clause, ask yourself: Does this group of words have a **subject** (who or what?) and a **verb** (what action?). If yes, it's a clause! Can it stand alone and make complete sense? If yes, it's a **main clause**. If no, it's a **subordinate clause**.