

## Phrases & Clauses

### INDEPENDENT (MAIN) CLAUSES

To be complete, a sentence must contain at least one [clause](#). An independent clause states a complete idea. Also known as a [clause](#), an independent clause expresses the sentence's main idea even when joined with phrases or subordinate clauses.

**subject**      **verb**  
*The president resigned.*

**Subject**      **verb**  
*My mother was born in Nigeria.*

**subject**              **verb**  
*Lenin's revolution was successful.*

### DEPENDENT (SUBORDINATE) CLAUSES

A [clause](#) has a subject and verb but does not express a complete thought. A dependent clause must be joined to an independent clause. Otherwise, the lone clause will be a sentence fragment – an error. Also known as a [clause](#), a dependent clause expresses an idea less important than (subordinate to) an idea expressed in a main clause.

Below, the words in bold are dependent clauses. They are attached to independent (main) clauses in complete sentences:

***After a long and successful career,*** the president resigned.  
My mother, ***who is now 58,*** was born in Nigeria.  
Lenin's revolution was successful ***because living conditions in early*** – century  
***Russia were deplorable.***

## PHRASES

Phrases are groups of words without subjects. Like dependent clauses, phrases express incomplete thoughts and cannot act as sentences. Phrases must be attached to independent (main) clauses to avoid being fragments.

***According to the Old Testament,*** Abel was the second son of Adam and Eve.  
***Cain, Abel's older brother,*** murdered him out of jealousy.

### Sample Quiz questions:

1. Identify the dependent (subordinate) clause(s) in the following sentence.  
To begin the concert, the conductor chose a piece by Mahler, who was an Austrian composer.

- a. who was an Austrian composer
- b. the conductor chose a piece by Mahler
- c. To begin

Answer: a. who was an Austrian composer

- 2. Identify the independent (main) clause(s) in the following sentence. The Greeks defeated the Persians at the Battle of Marathon.
  - a. The Greeks defeated the Persians
  - b. at the Battle of Marathon
  - c. the Battle of Marathon

Answer: a. The Greeks defeated the Persians