

Sentence, Clause, Phrase

Introduction to Sentences

(a) A sentence is a **group of words that makes complete sense**. It does not depend upon anything else to make its meaning clear.

For example:

Raju hit the ball.

Here, the individual words 'Raju' 'hit' 'the' 'ball' combine to form a group that has a particular meaning—*someone named Raju has hit the ball*.

This brings us to the second important point about a sentence.

(b) A sentence consists of two parts—**subject** and **predicate**. The subject of a sentence is **the person, place, thing or idea being talked about**. The predicate consists of a word or words which show **what is being talked about the person, place, thing or idea**.

Let us take the previous example:

[Raju] [hit the ball.]

Here, 'Raju' is the subject. He is the **topic of the sentence**. The remaining part of the sentence forms the predicate as it contains all the **information regarding the topic** (i.e., Raju).

The Subject and Predicate of a Sentence

The Subject of a Sentence

The subject of a sentence is a noun, pronoun or a group of words that acts as a noun.

A noun, as you know, is a person, place, thing or idea.

For example:

Geeta moved the **table**.

(‘Geeta’ is the name of a person and ‘table’ is a thing.)

Paris is in **France**.

(‘Paris’ and ‘France’ are names of places.)

Freedom is good.

(‘Freedom’ is an idea.)

A pronoun is used in place of a noun.

For example:

She moved the table.

It is in France.

It is good.

(‘She’ and ‘it’ are examples of pronouns.)

Sometimes a group of words can also act as the noun.

For example:

To play professional tennis is my ambition.

(Here, ‘to play professional tennis’ is a group of words that acts as a noun. It is the subject of the sentence.)

The Predicate of a Sentence

The predicate of a sentence is composed of a verb, and either an object or a complement.

A verb, as you know, describes the action performed by its subject or the state of being of its subject.

For example:

Balram **kicked** the football.

(Here, 'kicked' is the verb that shows the action performed by the subject 'Balram'.)

Prachi **seems** happy.

(Here, 'seems' is the verb that shows the state of being of the subject 'Prachi'.)

In the last two examples, the predicate is composed of different elements.

In the first case, the predicate is composed of the verb and the object. What is this object? The object is the person or thing upon which the action is performed by the subject.

So,

Balram = **Subject**

Kicked the football = **Predicate**

Another way to express this is,

Balram = **Subject**

Kicked = **Verb**

The football = **Object**

[Note: Like the subject, the object can be a noun, a pronoun or a group of words acting as a noun.]

In the second case, the predicate is composed of the verb and the complement. What is this complement? The complement gives more information about the subject.

So,

Prachi = **Subject**

Seems happy = **Predicate**

Another way of writing this would be,

Prachi = **Subject**

Seems = **Verb**

Happy = **Complement**

[Note: The complement can be a noun, an adjective or a group of words acting as a noun or an adjective.]

Introduction to Clauses

A clause is **a group of words containing a subject and a predicate**. There are broadly two types of clauses:

Those that **can stand alone and make their meaning clear**, and

Those that **cannot stand alone and make complete sense**

The first category of clauses is called **Independent**, while the second is known as **Dependent**.

[Remember: *Every independent clause is a sentence by itself.*]

For example:

Anjali was watching television while her brother was sleeping.

This sentence can be broken into two clauses as follows:

Anjali was watching television. (**CLAUSE 1**)

(Here, 'Anjali' is the subject and 'is watching television' is the predicate.)

While her brother was sleeping (**CLAUSE 2**)

(Here, 'her brother' is the subject and 'is sleeping' is the predicate.)

Clause 1 makes its meaning clear when it stands alone—*someone named Anjali was watching television*.

However, clause 2 is not able to do so. The presence of 'while' prevents it from making complete sense. It is dependent on clause 1 for its meaning.

Introduction to Phrases

Within different sentences, phrases perform different roles. They can:

(a) Act as nouns: A noun is a person, place, thing or idea.

[I] [saw] [**a ghost in the bed.**]

Here, 'a ghost in the bed' is the object of the action ('saw') performed by the subject ('I'). An object can only be a noun or a pronoun. Hence, in this sentence, the phrase is performing the role of a noun.

(b) Act as adjectives: An adjective describes or modifies a noun or a pronoun.

[My room] [is] [**full of books.**]

Here, 'full of books' is the complement of the verb ('is'). The complement tells us about the subject ('My room'). When you ask the question '*What kind of room is it?*', you get the answer 'it is *full of books*'. Hence, in this sentence, the phrase is performing the role of an adjective.

(c) Act as adverbs: An adverb describes a verb, an adjective or another adverb.

[The boy] [is running] [**very quickly.**]

Here, 'very quickly' is describing the main verb ('running'). When you ask the question 'running *how?*' you get the answer 'running *very quickly*'. Hence, in this sentence, the phrase is performing the role of an adverb.

Division of Sentences on the Basis of Purpose

On the basis of purpose, sentences can be classified as follows:

Declarative Sentences

A declarative sentence **makes some sort of declaration or statement.**

For example:

The service in that hotel is fantastic.

Here, the speaker of this sentence is making an assertion or stating a fact—*the service in a particular hotel is really good.*

Interrogative Sentences

An interrogative sentence **asks a question.**

For example:

Is Yudhishtir going to school?

Here, the speaker of this sentence is asking something—*whether Yudhishtir is going to school*.

Imperative Sentences

An imperative sentence **makes a request or gives a command**.

For example:

Open the door.

Please hold the bag for me.

In the first sentence, the speaker is commanding someone to do something—*open the door*.

In the second sentence, the speaker is requesting someone to do something—*hold the bag*.

Exclamatory Sentences

An exclamatory sentence **expresses some strong feeling or emotion**.

For example:

Oh no! My new dress is ruined!

Here, the speaker of this sentence is exclaiming her disappointment over something—*new dress is ruined*.

Division of Sentences on the Basis of Structure - SIMPLE sentences

A simple sentence **has only a single independent clause**.

For example:

My toy is broken.

This is an example of an independent clause. It stands by itself and makes its meaning clear—the speaker's *toy is broken*.

It has one subject and one predicate.

For example:

Hari is talking on the phone.

Here, the subject is 'Hari' and the predicate is 'is talking on the phone'.

It conveys only one idea.

For example:

Joseph is showing the guests his new home.

Here, only one idea is expressed—*someone named Joseph is showing his home to his guests*.

It can have more than one subject.

For example:

Ram and Shyam are designing a rocket.

Here, 'Ram' and 'Shyam' form the compound subject of the sentence.

It can have more than one verb.

For example:

Deepti ate tomato sandwich and drank orange juice.

Here, 'ate' and 'drank' form the compound verb of the sentence

Division of Sentences on the Basis of Structure - COMPOUND sentences

A compound sentence is **made up of two or more independent clauses of the same importance, joined by a coordinating conjunction.**

For example:

The passage was dark, so we could not see anything.

This sentence can be broken up into two independent clauses as follows:

The passage was dark. **(INDEPENDENT CLAUSE 1)**

We could not see anything. **(INDEPENDENT CLAUSE 2)**

Both these clauses have the same importance in the sentence. Hence, they are joined by the coordinating conjunction 'so', showing that the idea contained in independent clause 2 (*cannot see*) is the result of the idea contained in independent clause 1 (*dark passage*). Hence, it can be said that a compound sentence **has two or more Main Clauses.**

Each clause contains a subject and a predicate.

The passage = **Subject**

Was dark = **Predicate**

We = **Subject**

Could not see anything
= **Predicate**

Division of Sentences on the Basis of Structure - COMPLEX sentences

A complex sentence is **made up of an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. Each dependent clause begins with a subordinating conjunction or a relative pronoun.**

The **idea expressed by the independent clause is more important** than the idea expressed by the dependent clause.

For example:

I have to leave early because I have to meet someone.

This sentence can be broken up into two clauses as follows:

I have to leave early. (**INDEPENDENT CLAUSE**)

Because I have to meet someone (**DEPENDENT CLAUSE**)

You can see that the independent clause can stand by itself and make its meaning clear.

However, the dependent clause—beginning with the subordinating conjunction 'because'—cannot stand on its own and make complete sense. Since it begins with a subordinating conjunction, it is dependent upon (or subordinate to) the independent clause.

In the sentence, the idea contained in the independent clause (*leave early*) is more important than the idea contained in the dependent clause (meet someone).

Introduction to Conditional Sentences

Sometimes sentences are framed in order to show the main clause as being dependent on some sort of condition, i.e., **the idea expressed in the main clause is fulfilled on the condition that the idea contained in the dependent clause is fulfilled**. This dependent clause is also called the 'If clause'.

For example:

If I were the king of this land, I would ensure that everybody got their daily bread.

The sentence can be broken up into two clauses as follows:

If I were the king of this land (**IF CLAUSE**)

I would ensure that everybody got their daily bread. (**MAIN CLAUSE**)

Here, the action stated in the main clause (*ensuring daily bread for everybody*) can be fulfilled only on the condition that the idea stated in the If clause (*being the king*) is fulfilled.

[Note: *When the If clause comes first, the main clause is always preceded by a comma. Comma is not used when the If clause follows the main clause.*]

The Zero, First, Second and Third Conditionals

The Zero Conditional

To state general truths or scientific facts

If you cool water to 0°C, it changes into ice.

OR

Water changes into ice if it is cooled to 0°C.

[**Note:** You can use 'when' in the place of 'if' in such sentences.]

The First Conditional

To indicate something that may happen in the present or in the future

If you talk to my brother, he will tell you exactly where the jewels are hidden.

If I see you at the stadium, I will give you a call.

The Second Conditional

To indicate an unreal situation in the present or in the future; Often used for expressing a wish

If I were you, I would approach this issue in a different way.

If I had more time, I would join some theatre group.

The Third Conditional

To indicate something that did not happen in the past

If he had been more observant, he would have solved the case.

If they had played as a team, they would have won the final.

[**Note:** *In this case, you can also use 'could' or 'should' in the place of 'would'.*]

Clauses - Independent and Dependent

Clauses, as you have seen until now, can be broadly broken up into **Independent Clauses** and **Dependent Clauses**.

Independent Clauses

Independent clauses are **the ones that can stand on their own and make their meaning clear**.

For example:

The Math exam is tomorrow.

It is very difficult.

(These are independent clauses.)

Independent clauses are joined with the help of coordinating conjunctions.

For example:

The Math exam is tomorrow **and** it is very difficult.

(The two independent clauses are joined with the help of the coordinating conjunction 'and'.)

In a sentence containing two or more independent clauses (i.e., compound sentence), **the clauses** retain their importance and **serve as the main clauses** of the compound sentence.

In the previous example, two ideas are expressed—*Math exam's date* and *its difficulty*. Both these ideas are given equal importance because of the use of the coordinating conjunction.

Both the clauses that present these ideas are the main clauses of the sentence.

[Note: The coordinating conjunction 'and' is not a part of either of the two independent clauses. It is only used for joining the two.]

Dependent Clauses

SCROLL DOWN FOR THE NEXT TOPIC

Functions of Dependent Clauses

Dependent clauses can perform different functions in different sentences. They can:

Act as nouns

I know that you want to sleep.

I know. **(Main Clause)**

That you want to sleep **(Dependent Clause)**

Here, the dependent clause acts as the complement of the verb 'know'. You can ask the question 'I know *what?*' and get the answer 'that *you want to sleep*'. Hence, in this sentence, the dependent clause acts as a noun.

Act as adverbs

She reads newspaper because she wants to improve her general knowledge.

She reads newspaper.

(Main Clause)

Because she wants to improve her general knowledge

(Dependent Clause)

Here, the dependent clause describes the verb 'reads'. When you ask the question 'reads newspaper *why?*,' you get the answer 'to *improve her general knowledge*'. Hence, in this sentence, the dependent clause acts as an adverb.

Act as adjectives

As an adjective, a dependent clause can be either restrictive or non-restrictive.

A restrictive clause provides essential information about the noun that it describes.

A non-restrictive clause provides additional information about the noun that it describes.

He who completes his work on time will get the chocolate.

He will get the chocolate.

(Main Clause)

Who completes his work on time

(Dependent Clause that is Restrictive)

Here, the dependent clause describes the pronoun 'he'. It acts as an adjective. It is also essential for identifying the pronoun. It is important to know the 'he' that will get the chocolate. It will be the 'he' who completes his work on time. The sentence would not mean the same in the absence of the dependent clause. Hence, it is restrictive.

[Remember: Do not use commas to separate the restrictive clause from the main clause.]

Ritu, who is considered a dynamic personality by her friends, was chosen as the Indian Ambassador to Canada.

Ritu was chosen as the Indian Ambassador to Canada.

(Main Clause)

Who is considered a dynamic personality by her friends

(Dependent Clause that is Non-restrictive)

Here, the dependent clause describes the noun 'Ritu'. It acts as an adjective, but it is not essential for identifying the noun. The sentence would mean the same even in its absence. Hence, it is non-restrictive.

[Remember: Use commas to separate the non-restrictive clause from the main clause.]

Functions of Different Phrases

As you know by now, phrases are groups of words that contain neither a subject nor a predicate. They do not make complete sense on their own. However, their meaning becomes clear in a complete sentence.

You also know that phrases can act as nouns, adjectives and adverbs in different sentences.

Let us now study the principal categories into which phrases can be divided.

Every phrase has got a '**head**'. This is the term used for indicating that word in a phrase which **decides how the phrase will act in a sentence**—as a noun, as an adverb or an adjective.

Very often, the head of a phrase is its first word.

If the head of a phrase is a noun, then the phrase is a **noun phrase**.

For example:

[The drawer] is empty.

A noun phrase performs the function of a noun. Ask the question '*what* is empty?' and you get the answer '*the drawer*'. Here, the noun phrase is the subject of the sentence.

If the head of phrase is a verb, then the phrase is a **verb phrase**.

For example:

Ashwini [cooked the dinner.]

A verb phrase functions as the predicate of a sentence.

If the head of a phrase is a participle, then the phrase is a **participle phrase**.

A participle is a form of a verb. A verb can have a present participle form (root of a verb + ING) and a past participle form (verb ending in '-ed', '-d', '-t', '-en' or '-n').

For example:

The boy [running along the road] is my son.

Here, the present participle form of the verb 'run' is used. The participle phrase describes the noun 'the boy'. Hence, **the participle phrase** is performing the role of an **adjective**.

[Surprised by her reaction], I stared at her in amazement.

Here, the past participle form of the verb 'surprise' is used. The participle phrase describes the pronoun 'I'. Hence, the participle phrase is performing the role of an adjective.

If the head of a phrase is an infinitive, then the phrase is an **infinitive phrase**.

An infinitive is a form of a verb. It is formed by using 'to' before the root of a verb.

For example:

I love [to play cricket.]

Here, the infinitive form of the verb 'play' is used. The infinitive phrase is acting as the object of the verb 'love'. Ask the question 'I love *what?*' and you get the answer '*to play cricket*'. Hence, **the infinitive phrase** is performing the role of a **noun**.

If the head of a phrase is a gerund, then the phrase is a **gerund phrase**.

A gerund is a form of a verb. It is formed by adding 'ING' to the root of a verb.

For example:

[Playing hockey] is my passion.

Here, the gerund form of the verb 'play' is used. The gerund phrase is acting as the subject of the sentence. Ask the question '*what* is my passion?' and you get the answer '*playing hockey*'. Hence, **the gerund phrase** is performing the role of a **noun**.

If the head of a phrase is a preposition, then the phrase is a **preposition phrase**.

It consists of a preposition followed by a noun phrase.

For example:

The dog [inside the cage] is barking loudly.

Here, **the preposition phrase** is describing the noun 'the dog'. Ask the question '*which* dog?' and you get the answer 'the one *inside the cage*'. Hence, the preposition phrase is functioning as an **adjective**.

The boy went [into the house.]

Here, **the preposition phrase** is performing the function of an **adverb**. Ask the question 'went *where?*' and you get the answer '*into the house*'.