

PHRASES , CLAUSES AND SENTENCES

A phrase is a small group of words grammatically interlinked, but it cannot be used as a complete sentence. It is named or classified according to its function. E.g.

A minister – *a* is linked with the noun *minister* and so it is a **Noun Phrase**.

The tallest building – this is also a **Noun Phrase**. Both the and tallest are linked with building.

Very attractive – the whole thing acts as an adjective and so it is an **Adjective Phrase**.

Quite gorgeously decorated – it is an **Adjective Phrase**.

Now if I write

The person is very attractive, *very attractive* is an adjective phrase.

But if I write

He is a very attractive person, *a very attractive person* is a noun phrase.

Similarly *This building is the tallest in this city.* *the tallest* is an adjective phrase.

But in the sentence

This is the tallest building, *the tallest building* is a noun phrase.

Usually a noun phrase is made of

(a) determiner + noun

e.g. *A* *boy*
 the *book*
 some *books,*
 any *story* etc.

[GO BACK TO THE CHAPTER ON DETERMINERS AND REVISE THE WHOLE THING.]

(b) determiner + adjective + noun

e.g. *A* *wide* *river,*
 the *most powerful* *engine* etc.

I hope you could guess what I tried to say through all these. **The function of a phrase is decided on the fact how it has been used in a sentence.**

There are other types of phrases .

Verbal Phrase or Phrasal Verb: A verb followed by a preposition makes such a phrase. Often the meaning of the verb changes. E.g.

To be done with (to be finished, to be ruined)

To do away with (to get rid of)

This is an area in English that requires careful study as several verbs change their meaning when followed by some preposition(s).

Some grammarians call such phrasal verbs **idioms**.

Adverb Phrase: When a phrase functions like an adverb (i.e. shows time, place, manner, degree, extent etc.), it is called an Adverb Phrase. E.g. *In the front garden, out of curiosity, at the foot of a hill, under a huge mound etc.*

Prepositional Phrase: As you can guess, such a phrase functions as a preposition. BE CAREFUL. An adverb phrase like a prepositional phrase may begin with a preposition. But **a prepositional phrase begins as well as ends with a preposition**. E.g. By means of, in the wake of, by virtue of etc.

CLAUSE

A clause is just like a sentence (having subject and verb in some tense), but it is called a clause because it is part of a larger sentence. Look at the example:

Jitu is a school student. (sentence)

He is a good batsman.(sentence)

BUT

Jitu, who is a good batsman, is a school student.

Jitu is a school student, who is a good batsman.

In these sentences *Jitu is a school student* and *who is a good batsman* , both are not sentences but clauses.

Now if you separate *Jitu is a school student* and put full stop, it is still a sentence. Clauses that can be taken out of larger sentences and still be used as independent sentences are known as **MAIN OR INDEPENDENT OR PRINCIPAL CLAUSES** .

Parts like *who is a good batsman* that cannot be used as separate sentences are called **DEPENDENT OR SUBORDINATE CLAUSES**.

Subordinate clauses are related to principal clauses and on the basis of types of relations subordinate clauses are classified or identified as NOUN CLAUSE, ADJECTIVE CLAUSE, ADVERB CLAUSE.

ADJECTIVE CLAUSE:

What does an adjective do in a sentence? It describes a noun. So does an adjective clause. It describes a noun in the principal clause.

←
*I want a **book** that is on ancient Indian history.*

The subordinate clause *that is on ancient Indian history* describes the noun *book*. So it an adjective clause.

An adjective clause sits immediately after the noun it describes. So it may be at the end of a sentence (as you see in the example above) or it may be within the principal clause. One example of the second type:

*A man , **who has come from Mumbai** ,has left a message for you.*

Here the principal clause is --- *A man has left a message for you.*
The subordinate clause is ----- *who has come from Mumbai*

ADVERB CLAUSE

An adverb clause modifies the main verb i.e. says something about the main verb in the principal clause. It can also modify an adjective. Just like an adverb the subordinate clause shows **time , place, degree, manner, extent etc.**

Here are some examples:

*It is so **easy** that anyone can do it.* (adverb clause modifying adjective *easy*)

*We shall enter the station **when the train comes.*** (adverb clause of time)

*The thief is running away **that we cannot catch him.*** (adverb clause of reason—why running?)

*He stood **where there is no man.*** (adverb clause of place)

*The car ran **as best it could.*** (adverb clause of manner)

***That it is an epidemic,** it calls for more attention.* (adverb clause of cause/reason)

NOUN CLAUSE

What does a noun do in a sentence?

It sits as the doer (i.e. **subject**) or as an **object** to a verb or a preposition.

A noun clause also does the same. It can be the subject of the verb. E.g.

***Whatever he says** is beyond my understanding.* (Noun clause used as subject)

*Everyone knows **that he is a scholar.*** (noun clause object to the verb *knows*)

REMEMBER

When you find a principal clause and one or more subordinate clauses in a sentence, you must be sure it is a **COMPLEX SENTENCE**. It means all the sentences given as examples so far are complex sentences.

When you find two or more principal clauses joined with **and, or, because etc.**, you know it is a **COMPOUND SENTENCE**. E.g.

Either they will come back or they will send a messenger.

My friend left for Delhi and his uncle went back to his village.

A SIMPLE SENTENCE has no clause. It is an independent sentence.

Tip: When you search for clauses in long sentences, search for **verbs showing some tense**. That will tell you how many clauses are there in the sentence. E.g.

*He **boarded** a train and **went** to a city, where he **stayed** till his vacation **was** over.*

So the clauses are:

1. He **boarded** a train
2. (he) **went** to a city
3. where he **stayed**
4. till his vacation **was** over.

[With this knowledge you may read your grammar book now and try the exercises.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OF EARLIER EXERCISES WITHIN NEXT SEVEN DAYS]

