



Clauses

A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and its predicate.

Clauses have subjects and predicates. The word *clause* comes from the same root as the words *claustrophobia*, *enclosure*, and *close*. The idea is that a clause is a closing: The **subject** opens the topic, and the **predicate** closes it; the subject asks, and the predicate answers. A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and its predicate, and this one-two structure opens and closes an idea. Every clause has this subject/predicate set as its nucleus.

The clause includes not only the subject and the verb, but all of the modifiers and phrases that stick to them. A sentence might be only one clause, or it might contain several clauses, each with its own subject and predicate. In the sentence below, the clause is *My old **dog** now **has** small fleas*. The whole sentence is an independent clause.



Clauses can be **independent**, making sense by themselves, or they can be **dependent** and need to be connected to an independent clause in order to make sense. Some dependent clauses act like big adverbs; others act like adjectives or nouns.

Independent: **Damon went to the store.**

Dependent: **When Damon went to the store...**