A **clause** is a group of words that makes a statement. A clause has a subject and a predicate. The **subject** is what the clause is about. It is a person, thing, place, activity, condition, or idea. It consists of a noun, a pronoun, or a word acting as a noun.

The **predicate** says something about the subject. It consists of a verb and the words that modify or complete the meaning of the verb.

\[
\text{subject} \quad \text{complete predicate}
\]

The horse stepped on my foot.

\[
\text{subject} \quad \text{complete predicate}
\]

Sally made an A in math and a B in English.

\[
\text{subject} \quad \text{complete predicate}
\]

English is the worst class in the world.

Clauses come in two flavors: dependent and independent. An independent clause can stand on its own as a complete sentence. It has a subject and a predicate and it expresses a complete thought.

A dependent clause cannot stand on its own; it must be attached to an independent clause.

- "The baby cried" is an independent clause; it has a subject and a predicate (a verb).
- In "The baby cried because she was hungry," *because she was hungry* is a dependent clause. It has a subject (*she*) and a verb (*was*), but it cannot stand as a sentence. Think about it: *Because she was hungry* does not express a complete thought, does it?
- But "She was hungry" is a complete thought and an independent clause. It can stand on its own as a sentence. If we put *because* in front of this string of words, the clause becomes dependent.

Words called **subordinating conjunctions** turn independent clauses into dependent clauses. The subordinating conjunctions are:

- *when*, *though*, *as long as*, *whereas*
- *whenever*, *although*, *as soon as*, *than*
- *where*, *as though*, *whether*, *since*
- *wherever*, *even though*, *so that*, *as*
- *because*, *while*, *provided*, *if*
- *unless*, *before*, *provided that*
- *until*, *after*, *except that*
- *till*, *as if*, *in order that*

(see p. 110 of the *Grammar Workbook*)
Clauses and Phrases

Even though it has a subject and a verb, a clause beginning with a subordinating conjunction cannot stand on its own as a complete sentence. Because it is a dependent clause, it must be attached to an independent clause.

Correct:
I failed math even though I studied hard.
I failed math because I never studied.
I will fail math unless I study hard.  (The italicized words are subordinating conjunctions.)

Fragments (major errors):
I failed math. Even though I studied hard.
I failed math. Because I never studied.
I will fail math. Unless I study hard.  (In each example, the second string of words is a fragment.)

Learn the subordinating conjunctions.
Remember that whenever you use a subordinating conjunction, you are creating a dependent clause. Make sure that it is correctly attached to an independent clause to make a complete sentence.

A phrase is a group of words that does not have both a subject and a predicate. A phrase has the same job in a sentence that a single word can have; it can function as an adverb, the complement of a linking verb, or the subject of a verb.

\[
\text{subject} \quad \text{verb} \quad \text{phrase}
\]
The plane will arrive in 20 minutes.

Here, \textit{in 20 minutes} is a prepositional phrase that functions as an adverb; the phrase modifies (describes) the verb \textit{arrive} by telling us when the action will happen.

\[
\text{phrase} \quad \text{phrase}
\]
I decided to study engineering at Clemson University.

Here, \textit{to study engineering} is an infinitive (verbal) phrase that completes the meaning of the verb \textit{decided}; the phrase tells us what the person decided to study. The prepositional phrase \textit{at Clemson University} functions as an adverb to modify \textit{study}.

\begin{itemize}
  \item To \textit{err} is human; \textit{to forgive}, divine.  (Alexander Pope; \textit{An Essay on Man})
\end{itemize}

The underlined words are infinitive phrases (\textit{to} + verb) that function as subjects:
To \textit{err} (subject) is (linking verb) \textit{human} (predicate adjective or complement).

A phrase is not a complete thought. It does not have both a subject and a verb. It does not make a complete statement and cannot stand on its own as a sentence. A phrase is part of a sentence.