Phrases and Clauses: Building Blocks

How small word groups build powerful sentences



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What could this be?

"Because I ate breakfast late" — can it stand alone?



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Phrase or Clause? Test It

1

1. Find the action word (verb).

2

2. Find who or what does it (subject).

3

3. Got both? It's a clause.

4

4. Can it stand alone? Check independence.

5

5. Missing one? It's a phrase!

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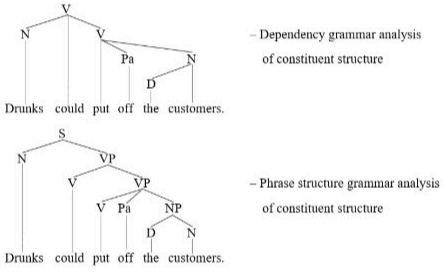
DID YOU KNOW?

Every sentence needs at least one clause.

Phrases alone are fragments — independent clauses bring the subject + verb that make meaning complete.



– Dependency grammar analysis of constituent structure

– Phrase structure grammar analysis of constituent structure

Diagram: Tjo3ya · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Wikimedia Commons

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What Adds More?

Our team won the game. Which add-on would you choose?

A in the last minute	**B** because we never gave up	**C** loud, proud, and tired

Vote with your hands, then explain why.

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Review: Phrases in Action



▶ 0:00 – 5:00

- Watch for: the subject + verb test
- Listen for: what each phrase adds

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What Do They Do?

📍

Where / When

Prepositional phrases add time or place.

🎨

Which One?

Adjectival phrases describe a noun.

⚡

How?

Adverbial phrases describe the action.



Who / What

Noun phrases act as subject or object.

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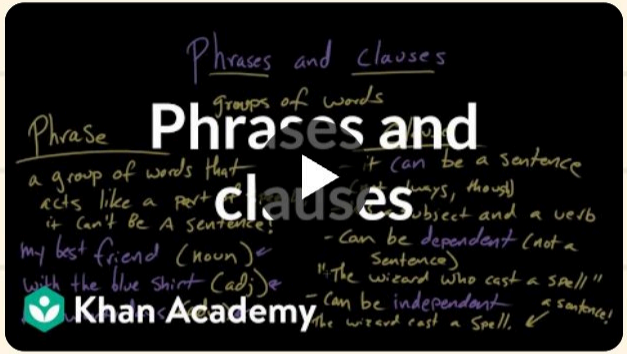
Clauses at Work



▶ 0:00 – 5:00

- Spot: independent vs dependent clauses
- Notice: how order changes commas

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Your task

Build super sentences with your partner using phrases and clauses.

1. Start with: Our class finished early.
2. Add one phrase and one dependent clause.
3. Label each part and explain its job.

10 min

In pairs

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Phrase vs. Clause

Phrase

- No subject + verb together
- Cannot stand alone
- Example: under the table

Clause

- Has subject + verb
- May stand alone or not
- Example: we hid under the table

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Think, pair, share

In 'When the bell rang, we cheered loudly,' what does the first part do for the second?

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Quick quiz

1. “After school” — phrase or clause?
2. “We stayed inside because it rained.” Which part is dependent?
3. What job does “with loud cheers” do in “We won with loud cheers”?

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