#### The Main Clause

#### How to recognize a **main clause** when you see one.

A main clause—sometimes called an independent clause—must contain a [subject](http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/subject.htm) and a [verb](http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/verb.htm) as well as express a complete thought. Look at the examples below:

Diane kicked the soda machine.

Diane = the subject; kicked = the verb.

A giant spider has made its home behind the shampoo bottle.

Spider = the subject; has made = the verb.

Susan and Michele are skipping their chemistry class to sit by the lake.

Susan, Michele = the subjects; are skipping = the verb.

#### Remember this important point:

You must have at least one main clause in every [sentence](http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/completesentence.htm). A main clause is the essential component. Without a main clause, a group of words is not a sentence.

A sentence can contain any number of other grammatical units, such as [prepositional phrases](http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/prepositionalphrase.htm), [subordinate clauses](http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/subordinateclause.htm), etc. It must, however, contain at least one main clause. Take a look at the example below:

Stephanie realized that a cheeseburger was no longer appetizing.

Stephanie realized = the main clause.

that a cheeseburger was no longer appetizing = subordinate clause.

#### Do not confuse a main clause with a subordinate clause.

When you place a [subordinate conjunction](http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/subordinateconjunction.htm) in front of a subject and verb, you will no longer have a main clause (complete thought). The group of words becomes a subordinate clause, like these examples:

When Diane kicked the soda machine ...

When Diane kicked it, what happened? Did the soda machine cough up her drink? Did the soda machine fall on top of poor Diane, crushing her underneath? Did coins start shooting out of the coin return slot? Because you no longer have a complete thought, you no longer have a main clause.

#### The Subordinate Clause

**How to recognize a *subordinate clause* when you see one.**

A subordinate clause—also called a *dependent clause*—will begin with a [**subordinate conjunction**](http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/subordinateconjunction.htm) or a [**relative pronoun**](http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/relativepronoun.htm) and will contain both a [**subject**](http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/subject.htm) and a [**verb**](http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/verb.htm). This combination of words will *not* form a [**complete sentence**](http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/completesentence.htm). A subordinate clause makes a reader want additional information to finish the thought.

**Subordinate conjunction list:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| afteralthoughasbecausebeforeeven ifeven thoughifin order that | onceprovided thatrather thansinceso thatthanthatthoughunless | untilwhenwheneverwherewhereaswhereverwhetherwhilewhy |

**Relative pronoun list:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| thatwhichwhichever | whowhoeverwhom | whosewhoseverwhomever |

Examples:

After Amy sneezed all over the tuna salad

***After*** = subordinate conjunction; ***Amy*** = subject; ***sneezed*** = verb.

Until Mr. Sanchez has his first cup of coffee

***Until*** = subordinate conjunction; ***Mr. Sanchez*** = subject; ***has*** = verb.

Who ate handfuls of Cheerios with his bare hands

***Who*** = relative pronoun; ***Who*** = subject; ***ate*** = verb.

**Remember this important point:** A subordinate clause cannot stand alone as a sentence because it is not a complete thought. The reader is left wondering, "So what happened next?" A word group that begins with a capital letter and ends with a period must contain at least one [**main clause**](http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/mainclause.htm).