

Year 6 Grammar

*Main and
Subordinate
Clauses*



Main Clauses: The Rules

A main clause is a group of words that contains a **verb** and a **subject** which makes complete sense on its own. Main clauses could also be called **simple sentences**.

Can you spot the **verbs** and **subjects** in these main clauses?

Karina **swam** fifty lengths.

The **classroom** **was** empty.

The **family** **were** trekking.



Subordinate Clauses: The Rules

A **subordinate clause** is a group of words that is **dependant** on the main clause because it **doesn't make sense on its own**. When main clauses and subordinate clauses are used together to form a sentence, it is called a **complex sentence**.

Can you spot the **main clauses** and **subordinate clauses**?

The girls fed the ducks
before they walked around the lake.

The windmill sails turned quickly
because it is very windy today.



Subordinate Clauses: The Rules

Subordinate clauses can often start with a subordinating conjunction.

after

though

because

so that

before

until

while

provided

if

since

once

even though

whether

unless

although

when

as



Subordinate Clauses: The Rules

Where in a sentence?

In the sentences we've looked at so far, the subordinate clauses have been **after** the main clause e.g.

The snow was thick on the ground
because it had snowed heavily.

The children laughed happily **as snowballs flew.**

Subordinate clauses don't always have to be after the main clause.



Subordinate Clauses: The Rules

Where in a sentence?

Look at these sentences where the subordinate clause comes **before** the main clause...

Although she hated them,
Jenny ate the sprouts.

Before the campfire was lit,
the children were shivering in the cold.

When we use a subordinate clause at the beginning of a sentence,
we must **add a comma** before the main clause.



Subordinate Clauses: The Rules

Fronted Adverbials

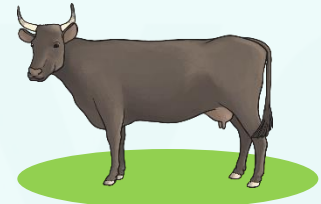
Subordinate clauses used at the beginning of a sentence can also be called **fronted adverbials**. Fronted adverbials can start in many ways including with **subordinating conjunctions, prepositions, -ing verbs or -ed verbs**.

As the sun shone, the cows ate the grass.

Out in the field grazing, they mooed happily.

Lying down in the sun, the cows began to snooze.

Summoned by the farmer, Daisy walked towards the milking shed.



The fronted adverbial subordinate clause will always need to be followed by a comma to separate it from the main clause.

Subordinate Clauses: The Tricky Bits

Subordinate clauses can also split the main clause. This is also called an **embedded clause** or (if the clause starts with a relative pronoun) a **relative clause**.
Look at these examples...

The Eiffel Tower, **which is in Paris**, is one of the busiest tourist attractions in the world.

Which is a **relative pronoun** so this subordinate clause can also be called a **relative clause**. It contains non-essential information so needs demarcating with commas.

Billy, **gasping for air**, tried to run from the charging bull.

This subordinate clause could also be called an **embedded clause**. Embedded means 'in the middle of' as it is in the middle of the main clause. It also contains non-essential information so needs demarcating with commas.

Quiz! Part 1

Put a tick in the correct column to show whether each group of highlighted words is a **main clause** or a **subordinate clause**.

	Main Clause	Subordinate Clause
If it starts to rain, you can wear your new wellington boots.		
Neil gasped for breath before setting off again.		
The koala, which is native to Australia, is a mammal.		

Quiz! Part 1 ANSWER

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	Main Clause	Subordinate Clause
If it starts to rain, you can wear your new wellington boots.		✓
Neil gasped for breath before setting off again.	✓	
The koala, which is native to Australia, is a mammal.		✓

Quiz! Part 2

Rewrite this sentence with the subordinate clause used as a fronted adverbial. Add a comma if necessary.

David didn't wear a coat
even though it was cold outside.

Quiz! Part 2 ANSWER

Rewrite this sentence with the subordinate clause used as a fronted adverbial. Add a comma if necessary.

David didn't wear a coat
even though it was cold outside.

Even though it was cold outside,
David didn't wear a coat.

Quiz! Part 3

Underline the **main clauses** in the following sentences.

1. Running late for work, Mum frantically searched for her keys.
2. The setting sun, which looked beautiful, glistened in the sky.
3. The gerbil bit my finger before running back to its cage.

Quiz! Part 3 ANSWER

Underline the **main clauses** in the following sentences.

1. Running late for work, Mum frantically searched for her keys.
2. The setting sun, which looked beautiful, glistened in the sky.
3. The gerbil bit my finger before running back to its cage.

Great Work Year 6!

It is now time to have a go
at the Grammar Worksheet
on main and subordinate
clauses.

