

1 Here's the Idea

Subordinate clauses can function as adjectives, adverbs, or nouns. Adjective clauses and adverb clauses, like adjectives and adverbs, modify other words in a sentence.

Adjective Clauses

▶ **An adjective clause is a subordinate clause used as an adjective to modify a noun or a pronoun.**

An adjective clause sometimes is called a **relative clause** because it relates to and modifies a specific word within a sentence. Like an adjective, an adjective clause answers the questions *What kind of . . . ?* or *Which . . . ?*

Some psychologists rely on **tests that determine specific personality types.**

MODIFIES NOUN

Someone who takes such a test may not always agree with the results, however.

MODIFIES PRONOUN

Words Used to Introduce Adjective Clauses

Relative Pronouns	Relative Adverbs
that, which, who, whom, whose	after, before, since, when, where, why

Essential and Nonessential Adjective Clauses

An **essential adjective clause** contains information that is critical to the identity of a modified word or to the meaning of a sentence as a whole.

Kiki took the personality test that has ten questions.

MODIFIES NOUN

(Which test did she take? She took the one with ten questions.)

A **nonessential adjective clause** adds information that is nice to have, but it is not absolutely necessary.

Kiki took the personality test, which has ten questions.

MODIFIES NOUN

(Which test did she take? She took the only one there was. By the way, it had ten questions.)

As the examples on the preceding page show, you can use the same adjective clause as either an essential or a nonessential clause. Therefore, when you write a sentence with an adjective clause, you must decide whether it contains information that is essential to your sentence. Your use of punctuation (commas or no commas around the clause) can help readers interpret your writing correctly.

For more on using commas, see p. 226.

Adverb Clauses

▶ **An adverb clause is a subordinate clause that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.**

Like adverbs, adverb clauses answer several specific questions such as *Where? When? Why? How?* and *To what extent?*

AI panics **whenever he takes a test.**

MODIFIES VERB

However, this time, the answers came

to him more easily **than he had expected.**

MODIFIES ADVERB

AI felt better **after he took the test.**

MODIFIES ADJECTIVE

Words Used to Introduce Adverb Clauses

Subordinating Conjunctions	Show
after, as, as long as, as soon as, before, since, until, when, whenever, while	time
because	cause
as, than	comparison
although, as long as, even if, even though, if, provided that, though, unless, until, whereas	condition
in order that, so that	purpose
as, as if, as though	manner
where, wherever	place

Sometimes some of the words in an adverb clause are implied rather than stated. Because these omitted words are often verbs, the clauses may seem to be phrases at first glance. Such clauses are called **elliptical**, which means “marked by the omission of one or more words.”

When (you are) taking a personality test, try to answer all items honestly.

No one can describe your traits and behaviors as accurately as you (can) yourself.