

the Writing Centers at Saint Mary's

Winona and Minneapolis

Grammar and Punctuation: Clauses and Phrases

A clause is a meaningful group of words containing a subject and a verb. There are two kinds of clauses: independent and dependent.

- **Independent clauses** can stand alone as a sentence, but dependent clauses cannot stand alone because they contain a word that makes them incomplete.
- **Dependent clauses** begin with subordinating conjunctions. Here are some common subordinating conjunctions: *as, after, although, because, before, even though, if, since, so* (meaning *so that*), *when, where, whether, while, unless, and until*.
- If we start the sentence with a dependent clause, we must place a comma at the end of that clause for clarity. If the dependent clause comes at the end of the sentence, we do not set it off with a comma.

Example: *Because of the increased prevalence of prediabetes, researchers investigated the causes of insulin resistance (Johnson, 2014).*



Example: *Researchers investigated the causes of insulin resistance because of the increased prevalence of prediabetes (Johnson, 2014).*



- An **introductory phrase** (or word) doesn't have a subject or verb, but it must also be set off with a comma when it comes at the beginning of a sentence.

Example: *Without additional research, it will be impossible to form informed conclusions.*



- You can identify introductory words and phrases because you can remove them from the sentence, and the sentence still makes sense.

Example: *Similarly, researchers studied the effects on blood sugar.*

