

First, you have to know these terms:

- ✓ **Independent clause:** a clause that expresses a complete thought. → *Monica walked on the grass.*
- ✓ **Dependent (subordinate) clause:** a clause that does not express a complete thought. → *Though it was wet*
- ✓ **A complete thought** → *Though it was wet, Monica walked on the grass.*
- ✓ **Essential clause:** a dependent clause that is necessary to the basic meaning of the completed sentence.  
→ *who are pregnant*  
*Women who are pregnant can crave salty or sweet foods.*
- ✓ **Nonessential clause:** a dependent clause that is not necessary to the basic meaning of the completed sentence. → *who growls whenever the phone rings*  
*Elmo, who growls whenever the phone rings, tried to attack the vacuum cleaner.*
- ✓ **Phrase:** a group of words that lack either a subject or a predicate. → *In early spring*  
*In early spring, I notice a change in people's attitudes.*
- ✓ **Appositive:** a phrase that makes a preceding noun or pronoun clearer or more definite by explaining or identifying it. → *rice pudding and fruit salad*  
*Candice's grandfather brought her favorite desserts, rice pudding and fruit salad.*

- ✓ **Fragment:** a phrase punctuated like a sentence even though it does not express a complete thought. → *Timothy saw the car. And ran.*
- ✓ **Coordinating Conjunction:** a word that when preceded by a comma or a semicolon joins two independent and equal clauses. (*and, but, so, or, for, nor, yet*) → *Dorothy had a beautiful rose garden, and her yard was a profusion of color every summer.*
- ✓ **Subordinating Conjunction:** a word that makes a clause a dependent clause (*after, although, as, because, before, if, once, since, than, that, though, unless, until, when, whenever, where, wherever, while*) → *After the accident, mourners covered the beaches nearest to the tragedy with roses.*
- ✓ **Conjunctive Adverb:** a word that introduces a relationship between two independent clauses (*accordingly, besides, consequently, furthermore, hence, however, instead, moreover, nevertheless, otherwise, then, therefore, thus*) → *On Tuesdays, I play racquetball; otherwise, I would go with you.*

To construct a sentence:

- ✓ Always have at least one independent clause in the sentence.
- ✓ Join two independent clauses with a semicolon or a comma and a conjunction. → *Chaucer was a narrator, and he was a pilgrim in his Canterbury Tales.*
- ✓ Do not run two or more independent clauses together without punctuation; that error is appropriately called a run-on. Wrong: *Chaucer was a narrator and he was a pilgrim in his Canterbury Tales.*
- ✓ Do not separate two independent clauses with just a comma; that error is called a comma splice. Wrong: *Chaucer was a narrator, he was a pilgrim in his Canterbury Tales.*
- ✓ Do not use a conjunctive adverb (the words *accordingly, besides, consequently, furthermore, hence, however, instead, moreover, nevertheless, otherwise, then, therefore, thus*) like a conjunction. Wrong: *Chaucer was a narrator, moreover he was a pilgrim in his Canterbury Tales.*
- ✓ Use a comma after a conjunctive adverb when it follows a semicolon. (See Conjunctive Adverbs)
- ✓ Use a comma after introductory words, phrases, and clauses. (See Subordinating Clauses)
- ✓ Use commas around nonessential clauses. Do not use commas around essential clauses. (See Nonessential and Essential Clauses)
- ✓ Use commas around appositives. (See Appositives)
- ✓ Use commas around parenthetical elements (a word or group of words that interrupt a sentence's flow). → *Mrs. Moses, that mean old crone, yelled at little Paula for laughing too loud!*