

Module 7: The Epic – The *Odyssey*

Topic 6 Content: Adjective and Adverbial Clauses Notes


Adjective Clauses


Adjective clauses are dependent clauses that function as adjectives in a sentence, modifying nouns or pronouns. They usually appear right after the noun that they modify. Also known as relative clauses, adjective clauses begin with either a relative pronoun or a relative adverb.


Relative pronouns include the words *that*, *which*, *who*, *whom*, or *whose*.

Relative adverbs include the words *when*, *where*, or *why*.

Take a look at these examples of adjective clauses embedded within sentences.


The students who had adequate sleep performed better on tests.
[In this sentence, the adjective clause *who had adequate sleep* modifies the noun *students*.]


Deciduous trees are plants that lose their leaves in the autumn.
[In this sentence, the adjective clause *that lose their leaves in the autumn* modifies the noun *plants*.]


The United States is a country where you can find a diversity of biomes.
[In this sentence, the adjective clause *where you can find a diversity of biomes* modifies the noun *country*.]

Adjective clauses that are restrictive are essential to the meaning of the sentence. These clauses restrict, or narrow down, the particular noun or pronoun they are modifying, thus differentiating the subject from other possible subjects. Restrictive clauses are never set aside with commas.

On the other hand, adjective clauses that are nonrestrictive are not essential to the meaning of the sentence; they simply provide additional information. They are set aside with one or two commas.

Take a look at how the use of commas changes a restrictive clause to a nonrestrictive and how the meaning of the sentence changes.

The students who had adequate sleep performed better on tests.
[This is a restrictive clause. Some students did not have adequate sleep and did not perform better, but the students who *did* have adequate sleep performed better.]

The students, who had adequate sleep, performed better on tests.
[This is a nonrestrictive clause. All the students performed better. And by the way, all the students also had adequate sleep.]

Now, take a look at another example.

Deciduous trees are plants that lose their leaves in the autumn.
[This is a restrictive clause. Deciduous trees are not just any plants; they are plants that lose their leaves. The fact that deciduous trees lose their leaves is a defining characteristic.]

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Deciduous trees are plants, which lose their leaves in the autumn.

[This is a nonrestrictive clause. This sentence implies that deciduous trees are plants, which is true, and that all plants lose their leaves, which is not true.]

Adverbial Clauses

Adverbial clauses are dependent clauses that function as adverbs in a sentence, modifying verbs, adjectives, or adverbs. They always begin with a subordinating conjunction, which introduces a subordinate clause and shows the relationship that the clause has to the rest of the sentence. Shown here is a list of common subordinating conjunctions.

after	even though	that
although	if	though
as	in order that	unless
as if	now that	until
as long as	once	when
as though	rather than	where
because	since	whether
before	so that	while
even if	than	

When adverbial clauses modify verbs, they can appear in the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence. Additionally, they can often be moved around within the sentence without changing the meaning. Take a look at these three sentences, which use the same adverbial clause. The adverbial clauses are underlined, and the modified verbs are in italics.

Once the plane arrives, the passengers will *begin* boarding.

The passengers will *begin* boarding once the plane arrives.

The passengers, once the plane arrives, will *begin* boarding.

When adverbial clauses modify adjectives or adverbs, they must appear next to the adjective or adverb that is modified.

Exhausted after she finished her first marathon, Julia returned home to rest.

[In this instance, the adverbial clause is modifying an adjective.]

Nowadays Julia can run *faster* than she could before she started training.

[In this instance, the adverbial clause is modifying an adverb.]