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Grammar Course for Second Year Students

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Lecture Five: Adverbial Clauses

1. Definition

An adverbial clause is a subordinate clause that functions as an adverbial in the main clause. An adverbial clause may, for example, say *when* or *where* or *how* about the action described in the main clause.

- *I will come tomorrow.*
- *I will come **after** / **have been to the shops**.*
- *Leave the books there.*
- *Leave the books **wherever you like**.*
- *Do the job this way.*
- *Do the job **however you like**.*

Adverbial clauses can, like other adverbials, be modified by adverbs:

- *Do **exactly** as you are told.*
- *She left **just** before you came in.*

Types of Adverbial Clause

As with adverbs and adverbials, adverbial clauses can be categorized according to their meanings and uses.

1. An adverbial clause of time is a subordinate clause that says *when* something happens.

Adverbial clauses of time are introduced by conjunctions such as *after*, *as*, *as soon as*, *before*, *once*, *since*, *till*, *until*, *when*, *whenever* or *while*:

- *I'll come **when I'm ready**.*
- *I'm not leaving **till I know the truth**.*
- *Always wash your hands **before you handle food**.*
- *You'll be all right **once you get to the hotel**.*

2. An adverbial clause of place is a subordinate clause that says *where* something happens.

It is introduced by the conjunctions *where* and *wherever*:

- *Put that rock **where** you put the other ones.*
- *Put it **wherever** you like.*

3. An **adverbial clause of manner** is a subordinate clause that says how something happens.

It is introduced by conjunctions such as *as*, *as if*, *as though*, *how*, *however* and *like*:

- *Clue the pieces together **as** I showed you.*
- *Say it **as if** you meant it.*
- *You must do it exactly **as** I told you.*
- *I'll do it **however** I like.*
- *Mould the clay just **how** I showed you.*

4. An **adverbial clause of reason** tells you why something happens or why it should happen.

Adverbial clauses of reason are introduced by conjunctions such as *as*, *because*, *in case*, *seeing*, *seeing as*, *seeing that* and *since*:

- *They didn't go on a picnic after all **because** it was raining.*
- *As it was raining, we decided not to go.*
- *Take an umbrella **in case** it rains.*
- *Seeing that it's raining, you'll have to play indoors.*

✚ Notice that certain conjunctions may introduce more than one type of clause:

- *As I was leaving my office, I heard an explosion in the street, (time - says when)*
- *As I am just leaving, you can have my seat, (reason - says why)*
- *Do as I do. (manner - says how)*
- *He has been very depressed since his wife died, (time - says when)*
- *Since I have nothing better to do, I'll come with you. (reason - says why)*

5. An **adverbial clause of purpose** also tells you why something is happening, but states the *aim* or *purpose* of it rather than the reason for it or cause of it. Adverbial clauses of purpose are introduced by conjunctions such as *so*, *so that* and *in order that*:

- *Take an umbrella **so** you don't get wet.*
- *My neighbour looked after the baby **so that** I could go shopping on my own.*

6. An **adverbial clause of result** tells you what results from something happening. Adverbial clauses of result are introduced by *that* and are linked to a *so* or *such* in the main clause:

- It rained **so much that the garden was flooded.**
- She was **so nervous that she spilt her drink.**
- There was **such a demand for the tickets that they sold out within half an hour.**

7. An **adverbial clause of concession** is introduced by conjunctions such as *although, even if, even though, however, no matter what/who/where etc, though, whatever, wherever, while, whilst, whoever, whereas* and *whether... or*. Adverbial clauses of concession may imply that there is something surprising about what is said in the main clause in the light of what is being said in the subordinate clause:

- **Although I've known Peter for years, I've never met his wife.**
- **Even though the sun was shining, it was still very cold.**
- **I'll be happy no matter where we go.**
- **Whatever I do, I'm always in the wrong.**
- **I'm going whether you come with me or not.**

Concession clauses may put forward a possible reason for doing something, with the implication that it is not a good enough reason for doing whatever is suggested in the main clause:

- **Even though he broke your camera, you had no right to hit him.** (= he broke your camera but that is not a good enough reason for hitting him)
- **Even if the exam questions are simple, check your answers carefully.** (= the questions may be simple but that is not a good enough reason for you not to check your answers)

Adverbial clauses of concession may make a contrast with something said in the main clause:

- **She's a charming woman, whereas her husband is a complete pain in the neck.**
- **The main winter holiday in England was always Christmas, whilst in Scotland it was New Year.**

Adverbial clauses of concession that make contrasts are sometimes called adverbial clauses of contrast.

8. An **adverbial clause of condition**, or a conditional clause, is a subordinate clause that states the conditions or circumstances that are, or would be, necessary for what is talked about in the main clause to happen or apply. A sentence with a conditional clause in it is called a conditional sentence. Conjunctions that introduce conditional clauses are *as long as, if, on condition that, provided, provided that, providing, providing that, so long as* and *unless*:

- **I'll come if she invites me.**
- **I won't come unless she invites me.**
- **You won't pass your exams if you don't study.**

- You won't pass your exams **unless** you **work harder**.
- **So long as** you **don't forget your lines**, you'll be fine.
- You can stay **providing** you **lend a hand**.

These three forms of conditional sentence are called **first conditionals**, **second conditionals** and **third conditionals** respectively.

1/ **First conditionals** state simple facts about what *will* or *may* happen in the future //something else happens or *unless* something else happens.

- *If I go to the shops tomorrow, I'll get you those books you want*
- *Those plants will die if you don't water them regularly.*
- *Those plants will die unless someone waters them.*
- *Unless you work a lot harder, you won't pass your exams.*
- *If he has finished the crossword, I'll get a look at the paper at last.*
- *If James isn't home yet, I can phone again later on.*
- *If it doesn't stop raining soon, the match may be cancelled.*

2/ **Second conditionals** are used to describe what *would* happen in the future //something else happened first.

Second conditionals express greater uncertainty than first conditionals about whether or not what is being spoken about will ever actually happen: they are sometimes said to express *unreal* or *hypothetical* conditions.

- *I would come if she invited me.* (but she might not invite me)
- *I wouldn't come unless she invited me.*
- *If you worked harder, you would pass your exams,* (but I know you may not work harder)
- *If we were asked to help, of course we would help,* (but we might not be asked)

Second conditionals are also used to describe something that *would be* possible or true *if only* something else existed or was true (whilst in fact it does not exist or is not true). Second conditionals therefore express *imagined* situations:

- *If only we had wings, we could fly out of here,* (but we don't have wings, so we can't fly)
- *We could go to Japan for our holiday if only we had enough money,* (but we don't have enough money, so we can't go)

3/ **Third conditionals** refer to the past and say what *would have* or *might have* happened if something else had happened first or what *would have* or *might have* been true if something else had been true. Third conditionals therefore refer to something that has *not* happened or was *not* the case.

- *We would have won if we **had played** better, (but we didn't play better, so we didn't win)*
- *I would have come if she **had invited** me.*
- *If I **had known** that, I would never have helped them.*
- *If you **had been wearing** more sensible shoes, you **wouldn't have fallen***
- *We could have escaped if only we **had had** a ladder.*
- *We **might have stayed** longer if we **had had** more time.*
- *If you **hadn't lost** the tickets, we **would have been watching** the football by now.*

Practice

1/ In each of the following sentences, underline the adverb clause once, and underline the word or words that it modifies twice.

1. John Keats's work will be studied as long as English poetry is studied.
2. Before he died at the early age of twenty-five, Keats had written some of the finest poems in the English language.
3. It is actually quite easy for one to gain a quick taste of Keats's talents, since many of his most acclaimed works are short poems called odes.
4. Some were written in great haste as if he ^{was} were afraid to lose his inspiration.
5. For example, after he had spent a few hours sitting outside one day, he wrote one of his most famous poems, "Ode to a Nightingale."
6. When the poet Shelley heard of Keats's death, he wrote a long poetical lament entitled "Adonais."
7. Since Keats had not been very popular with the critics, Shelley blamed them for the poet's death.
8. Late in his life, when he learned he was dying from tuberculosis, Keats moved from England to Rome.

2/ Combine each of the following pairs of sentences to form one complex sentence. To do this, change the second sentence to an adverb clause. Then add it to the first sentence.

1. Great Britain has surprisingly mild winters. The Gulf Stream brings warm air from the south.
.....
2. A lunar eclipse occurs. The earth passes between the sun and the moon.
.....
3. A tree is deciduous. It loses its leaves in the fall.
.....

3/ State what sort of adverbial clause (time, manner, place, etc) the underlined clauses in the following sentences are:

10. After he landed there on January 18, 1778, he brought the news of the islands' existence to the outside world.

11. The Hawaiians were quite impressed with Cook because they attributed divine powers to him.

12. As the eighteenth century drew to a close, King Kamehameha grew powerful.

13. After he obtained guns from European traders, the king waged a war of conquest.

14. The king consolidated Hawaii into a single kingdom as soon as he was victorious.

15. His son's coming to the throne in 1819 was more important than anyone realized.

6/ / Identify the adverb clauses in these sentences, and then reduce them to adverbial phrases whenever possible.

1. Builders use plywood in the construction of small boats because it is easy to shape.

2. I haven't spoken with Jane since she moved.

3. Airplanes sometimes fly to unscheduled cities when the weather is bad.

4. I'll wear my sandals if the weather is warm.

5. Whenever I walk to school, my cat follows me down the street.

6. Please read the book while it's still available from the library.

7. Since it was just painted, don't lean against the wall.

8. Tomatoes taste best when they're fully ripened.

9. Everybody ate dessert after they finished eating the main course.

10. Although it was written in 1814, "The Star-Spangled Banner" did not become the official national anthem until 1931.

11. Soldiers must stand at attention when they speak to an officer.

12. I'll cut the grass today if it doesn't rain.

13. When they feel threatened, dogs sometimes display aggressive behavior.

14. Incandescent and fluorescent bulbs produce light differently although they both serve the same purpose.

15. The concert will end at 10:30 P.M. unless the audience insists on several encores.

16. You will receive extra credit if you turn in your project early.

17. Grace swims better than she dives.

18. The pep rally won't begin until the last class of the day has ended.

19. Keiko wrote her name on the chalkboard after she finished the problem.

20. Elena will groom the horse in the morning so that she can ride it in the afternoon.