

# Syntactic Structures

This handout was adapted from Gillis & Eberhardt (2018) – *Syntax: Knowledge to Practice*. It is designed to be used as an educator reference sheet and not as a teaching material with students.

## Independent Clause

An independent clause communicates a complete idea. It is a group of words, including a subject and a verb. A sentence must contain an independent clause.

*Hong enjoys novels.*

*The dog barks loudly all day.*

## Dependent Clause

A dependent clause does not communicate a complete idea. Instead, it tells more about the subject or predicate in the independent clause. It is a group of words including a subject and a verb.

*The crowd, **who looked happy**, danced across the street.*

The dependent clause tells more (which one?) about the subject.

*While **we were playing football**, the ball thrown by my friend went into the lake.*

The dependent clause tells more (when?) about the predicate/verb, sat.

## Phrase

A phrase is a group of words that function together as a single unit and does not express a complete idea. It serves a functional purpose, answering questions like who, what kind, how, or where. A phrase does not include both a subject and a verb.

Where?      *under the stairs*  
When?      *at recess*  
Which one?      *with the red hat*