What is the definition of a sentence?
TRADITIONAL DEFINITION

A group of words that contains a **subject** and a **verb**.

RIGHT?
Yes … and no.

Let’s test it out.
Is this a sentence?

Because he was sleeping
It contains a subject (he)

And a verb phrase (was sleeping)

but that word “because” confuses things...
Because he was sleeping… **what?**

Did he miss his show?  
Was he late for work?  
I don’t understand.  
Tell me more!
All sentences must contain a **subject** and a **verb**.

However, **not all groups of words** that contain a **subject** and a **verb** qualify as a sentence.

Which is why we need a new definition of a sentence.
NEW DEFINITION
“SENTENCE”

A group of words that contains at least one main clause.
So what’s a **clause**?
A clause is a group of words that contains at least one subject and at least one verb.
Notice that this definition doesn’t say anything about expressing a complete thought.
THAT’S BECAUSE THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF CLAUSES

MAIN CLAUSE
Sometimes called independent clause

SUBORDINATE CLAUSE
Sometimes called dependent clause
**Matt is** an excellent golfer.

This group of words has a subject (**Matt**)

It has a verb (**is**)

It expresses a complete thought.
Although he seldom plays.

This group of words has a subject (he).

It has a verb (plays).

But it does not express a complete thought.
Combine these clauses

Matt is an excellent golfer

Although he seldom plays

And you not only have a complete thought, you also have created...
A SENTENCE
(according to our new definition)
Matt is an excellent golfer although he seldom plays.

Or….

Although he seldom plays, Matt is an excellent golfer.
What makes a clause “subordinate”? 
ANSWER

SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS!
Adding a **subordinating conjunction** changes the meaning of a clause.

Look what happens when you add a subordinating conjunction to a main clause: **I eat**
When I eat
After I eat
Before I eat
Because I eat
Even though I eat
Whenever I eat
While I eat…
See what happens?

Suddenly the clause “I eat” is dependent (subordinate) on another clause in order for it to make sense.
When I eat, I am happy.
After I eat, I feel sleepy.
Before I eat, I am a grump.
Because I eat, I get strong.
Even though I eat, I still want more.
Whenever I eat, I get a stomach ache.
While I eat, I do my homework.
Learning to recognize **subordinators** in a sentence will help you identify **subordinate clauses**.
Which in turn will help you become a more sophisticated writer as you apply these skills to your own writing.
Shall we practice?