Phrase versus Clause

Phrases
A **phrase** is a group of words that modifies a sentence. It can lack a subject or the verb or both. A phrase cannot sit alone or act as a complete sentence. Instead, a phrase provides more information to clarify meaning or add description to an independent or dependent clause.

The different types of phrases are
- prepositional phrase (*in the school*)
- infinitive phrase (*to leave the store*)
- participial phrase (*destroyed by the fire*)
- gerund phrase (*writing the essay*)

**Example 1**
A fire started.

Although this is a complete clause since it contains a subject and a verb, adding the prepositional phrase *in the school* to the end of it will add information and clarify meaning:

A fire started *in the school*.

**Example 2**
Shoppers had.

Although *Shoppers had* could be called a complete clause since it contains a subject and a verb, it lacks full meaning. Adding the verbal phrase *to leave the store* to the end of it will add information and clarify meaning:

Shoppers had *to leave the store*. 
Example 3

In the above example, the reader may want to know why shoppers have to leave the store; therefore, adding a participial phrase *destroyed by the fire*, adding another clause *it was* and a conjunctive adverb *because* will provide more information and clarify meaning:

Shoppers had to leave the store because it was *destroyed by the fire*.

Example 4

Another phrase is called the gerund phrase. This phrase begins with a verb that ends in *–ing* but acts as a noun (and thus forms a phrase) instead of a verb.

Sometimes James has trouble.

Although this is a complete clause since it contains a subject (James) and a verb (has), adding the gerund phrase *writing the essay* to the end of it will add information and clarify meaning:

Sometimes James has trouble with *writing the essay*.

This sentence can also be written in reverse, but a comma must follow the phrase, as shown in the following examples:

*Writing the essay*, sometimes James has trouble.

*In the school*, a fire started.

Clauses

A **clause** is a complete sentence. A complete sentence **must contain a subject and a verb (predicate)**.

An **independent clause** is a full sentence that stands alone in meaning.

*She studies hard.* *(She is the subject, and studies is the verb.)*
A dependent clause is not a full sentence, but is attached to an independent clause to provide meaning. It is called “dependent” because it depends on an independent clause to give the sentence meaning.

When she has a test... (In this clause, she is the subject, and has is the verb.)

Example of a dependent clause that is attached to the independent clause to provide full meaning:

When she has a test, she studies hard.