

Lesson 23: Shifters

In the next three lessons we are going to study three types of clauses: **Shifter** Clauses, **Describer** Clauses, and **Completer** Clauses.

What is a shifter clause?

One of the most common kinds of sentences in English is the kind with a **shifter clause** at the front or at the end of the trunk. We call it a shifter clause because it can shift or move from the front to the end without changing the meaning. In English, the word "shift" means to move from one place to another.

Let's look at some TRUNKS and shifter clauses to see how they work. Abbreviations: "CW" for clause word, T for TRUNK, ES for End Shifter, and FS, for Front Shifter.

S ←-predicate-- , S ←-predicate---
 CW * VxD * X

Example: When my family left Ecuador, I was only eleven.

CW

In this example, the CLAUSE is: When my family left Ecuador,

In this example, the TRUNK is: I was only eleven.

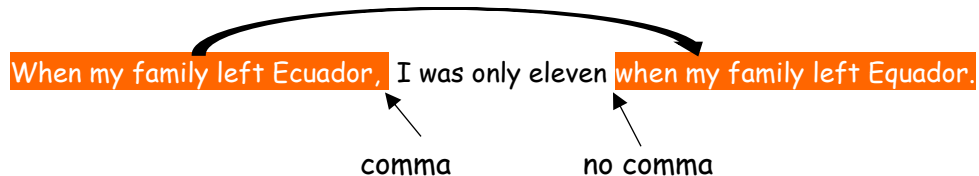
Notice that the two groups of words look similar. They both have subjects and predicates. The only difference is that *the clause also has a clause word, "when."*

👉 Remember:
A clause must have a subject.

When we put these sentences together, we get the sentence:

When my family left Ecuador, I was only eleven.

Now we will see why this type of clause is called a **shifter clause**. We can write the sentence another way by placing the **shifter clause** at the *end* of the trunk.



What does a shifter clause do?

The purpose of a shifter clause is to give more information about the trunk. It gives information about time, reason, condition, or expectation.

Note: Some grammar books call **shifter clauses** *adverbial clauses*.

Shifters are "dependent clauses."

Clause words used with Shifter Clauses			
TIME	CONDITION	REASON	OPPOSITE OF EXPECTATON
when while whenever before after since (a past time)	if unless	because since (because)	even though although while

Here are some examples.

Time shifter clauses:

After the President left the city, the traffic returned to normal.

We left the bar **before they arrived.**

I waited for him **until he arrived.**

Shifter clauses that state a condition:

I'll get the book for you **if you give me the money.**

My son won't go to sleep **unless I read him a story.**

If I won the lottery, I would quit my job and travel.

Shifter clauses that give reasons:

I left the party early **because I wasn't having a good time.**

Since I couldn't find a job in my country, I came to the United States.

Shifter clauses that state the opposition of expectation:

Although I studied hard for the exam, I failed it.

We were always a happy family even though we were very poor.

Time in shifter clauses

The time (tense) used in shifters and their trunks has to make sense. These time relationships can have fancy names like unreal, hypothetical, Type I, and imaginary. This book won't go into detail about this, but you can look at the examples, mark the verbs in the shifter and the trunk, and use those as a model.

Other kinds of shifters.

You have learned how shifter *clauses* operate to add more information to trunks. In addition to clauses, *prepositional phrases*, *noun clusters*, and even *single words* can be shifters.

Trunk with shifter clause.

Whenever I have to speak English, I get nervous.

I get nervous whenever I have to speak English.

Trunk with prepositional phrase as shifter.

I get up at 9:30 on weekdays.

On weekdays, I get up at 9:30.

Trunk with noun box as shifter. optional comma

Last Saturday, my cousin José came over.

My cousin José came over last Saturday.

Trunk with one word as shifter.

Yesterday I took my last final exam.

I took my last final exam yesterday.

Commas

The **front shifter** is not a part of the subject.

1-2 words: If a front shifter is one or two words long, the comma is optional.

3 or more To separate a long shifter from the subject we put a **comma** between them.

End An **end shifter** doesn't need a comma.



Lesson 23 Exercise 1

In this exercise,

- Put a box around **each** subject. Write **CW** over the clause word, and circle any **commas**.
- On the line, write TES if the trunk comes first. Write FS, T if the shifter comes first.

Example: FS, T ^{CW} Before you ^S begin to cook, you ^S should wash your hands.

1. _____ I got lost when I took the subway the first time.
2. _____ If I knew her phone number, I would call her.
3. _____ Even though John worked two jobs, he could not earn enough money.
4. _____ Whenever Heeran thinks about her friends back home, she begins to cry
5. _____ New York is a difficult place to live unless you have a lot of money.

Lesson 23 Exercise 2

Combine the trunks into one sentence that has a trunk and a shifter clause. Use the clause word that I have provided. Write the sentence the that makes the most sense to you.

1. He read the book.
He wrote the report.
(after) _____
2. I had to go home.
My parents were sick.
(because) _____
3. They loved each other.
They couldn't get married.
(even though) _____

Lesson 23 Exercise 3

Write sentences with these shifter clauses. I have suggested X-Word/Verb combinations. You can use these or your own. Use some Front Shifters and some End Shifters. I have done the first one for you.

1 (when was) TRUNK: VxD
 -----T----- ES-----
John asked questions when he was confused.

2 (whenever VxO) TRUNK: VxO

3 (before VxD) TRUNK: VxD

4 (while was Ving) TRUNK: was Ving

5 (because VxD) TRUNK: VxD

6 (even though VxD) TRUNK: couldn't Vb

7 (If VxO) TRUNK: will Vb

8 (unless is) TRUNK: will Vb



Lesson 23 Exercise 4

Write sentences using different kinds of shifters. I will write the type of shifter to use. Write all of these sentences as FRONT shifters. Remember the comma after a front shifter of three or more words.

1. (Shifter clause)

2. (Prepositional phrase)

3. (Noun Cluster)

4. (One word)

Now write the same sentences with the shifters at the END. Remember--no comma.

5. (Shifter clause)

6. (Prepositional phrase)

7. (Noun Cluster)

8. (One word)
