

Making English Grammar Meaningful and Useful
Mini Lesson #14
Adverb Clauses: Don't Use Future Tense

The **purpose** of this lesson is to describe **Adverb Clauses** and illustrate a few characteristics of their use.

Adverb Clauses provide information about the **Main Clause** of the sentences in which they are found. They are the only kind of **Dependent Clause** that is not a part of the **Main Clause**. They can be found either before the **Main Clause** or after it. There are a few important aspects to learn about them.

Adverb Clauses and **Adverb Phrases** have several meanings, which are illustrated in the following chart. Notice the differences in some cases between the **CONNECTORS** used with **Adverb Clauses** and those used with **Adverb Phrases**.

Meanings of Adverb Clauses and Phrases

Meaning	Adverb Clause	Adverb Phrase
Time	The game was played after it stopped raining.	The game was played after the rain.
Reason	The game was not played because it rained.	The game was not played because of the rain.
Purpose	The game was delayed so that the field could dry.	The game was delayed in order to let the field dry.
Contrast	Both teams came to the game although it rained.	Both teams came to the game in spite of the rain.

Since **Adverb Clauses** are not found within the **Main Clause**, they can be found either before it or after it. All of the sentences in the chart above could be expressed with the **Adverb Clauses** and **Phrases** coming before the **Main Clauses**. When an **Adverb Clause** precedes the **Main**

Clause, it is preferable to put a comma between the **Adverb Clause** and the **Main Clause**. When the **Main Clause** comes first, a comma is not needed because the **Adverb Clause Connector** indicates the beginning of the **Adverb Clause**. (For example, notice the 3 commas in the preceding sentences.)

Adverb Clauses have one characteristic that ELLs need to be made aware of. The Simple Future Tense cannot be used in an **Adverb Clause** when the clause expresses a future time. The Simple Present Tense or the Present Continuing Tense is used instead. Note the following examples:

1. Tomorrow, he **will drive** home. Tomorrow, he **will wash** his car.
2. Tomorrow, he **will drive** home and he **will wash** his car.
3. Tomorrow, he **will drive** home and **wash** his car.
4. Tomorrow, **after he drives home**, he **will wash** his car.
5. Tomorrow, he **will drive** home **before he washes his car**.

All the examples in these sentences will take place *tomorrow*. When the two ideas are presented in separate sentences, as in example 1, they employ the Simple Future Tense. When they are combined by a Simple Connector, as in sentence 2, the Simple Future Tense is used with both clauses. Even in Sentence 3, where the Simple Connector connects phrases, the Simple Future Tense is used with both verbs. However, **Adverb Clauses** are used in both sentences 4 and 5. Notice that the Simple Present Tense is used in both **Adverb Clauses** in both sentences despite the obvious future meaning of the clauses. **Future Tenses** cannot be used in **Adverb Clauses** of **time**.