

Forming Complex Sentences with Subordinating Conjunctions

Definitions

Independent Clause: An independent clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb, expresses a complete thought, and can stand alone as a sentence.

Dependent Clause: A dependent clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb, does *not* express a complete thought, and *cannot* stand alone as a sentence.

Complex Sentence: A complex sentence is a sentence that contains one independent clause and at least one dependent clause.

Subordinate Clause: A dependent clause that begins with a subordinating conjunction. Since subordinate clauses are adverbial, they may appear at the beginning or end of a complex sentence.

Table of Subordinating Conjunctions

Time	After, As, As soon as, Before, Once, Since, Until, When, While
Manner	As, As if, As though, Like
Cause and Effect	Although, Though, Whereas, While, Except, That
Condition	Because, In that, Now that, Since, So that
Condition	If, In case, Provided (that), Unless
Purpose	So that, In order that
Comparison	As...as, More than, Less than, Than

(Source: Klammer, Thomas P., Shultz, Muriel R., Della Volpe, Angela.. *Analyzing English Grammar*. Pearson Education, 2007.)

Punctuating Complex Sentences with Subordinating Conjunctions

If a subordinate clause appears at the beginning of a complex sentence, it must be separated from the independent clause by a comma.

Example: *After she finished her homework, Monica went shopping.*

In general, if a subordinate clause appears after the independent clause in a compound sentence, no comma is needed.

Example: *Monica went shopping after she finished her homework.*

Note on punctuation: If the subordinating conjunction in a complex sentence is *whereas, though, although, or even though*, a comma is needed to show separation between the two clauses.

Exercises

Without looking at the above table, identify the subordinating conjunctions in the following sentences and identify how they are functioning. Then rewrite the sentences by changing the order of the clauses and punctuate as needed.

1. John tried hard to finish his super fudgy-wudgy sundae, though it seemed an impossible task.
2. I will pay you back as soon as I get the money.
3. Until I started going to class regularly, I performed poorly on the weekly quizzes.
4. Even though she had a ten-page paper to write, Mary went to the movies with friends.
5. Before he was a famous writer, John Steinbeck was a maintenance man.
6. After she graduates this year, Julie will work in her father's law firm.

Key: 1. though 2. as soon as 3. until 4. even though 5. before 6. after