

Complex Sentences – Independent & Dependent Clauses

Building a Complex Sentence - Type 1

A Complex Sentence will begin or contain a subordinating conjunction and include at least 1 independent and dependent clause.

A dependent clause will begin with a subordinating conjunction, so familiarize yourself with the list of most common subordinating conjunctions.

1) If a sentence or fragment of a sentence begins with a subordinating conjunction, it is considered a **dependent clause**.

For example: **As soon as** you do your homework

2) You will then add a comma at the end of the dependent clause.

For example: As soon as you do your homework,

3) You will then add an independent clause. This is basically either a simple or compound sentence, after the comma.

For example: As soon as you do your homework, **we can go out for ice cream.**

Example with compound independent clause: As soon as you do your homework, **we can go out for ice cream, or we can make brownies here at home.**

4) Now to decide where the comma goes, or basically to decide where the dependent clause ends, it is simple. Just look for where the simple sentence or compound sentence begins. Look back to your Simple Sentence checklist to see what a sentence needs. It needs at least a subject and a verb and usually there is the third part of more information afterwards. So look for the subject without a subordinating conjunction before it.

By looking at the sentences above in number 3, you can see the independent clause began with “**we**”. This was the subject and it was followed by the rest of the parts needed in a simple sentence or compound sentence.

So the part of a sentence that begins with a subordinating conjunction cannot stand on its own as a whole sentence. It is a dependent clause.

Building a Complex Sentence - Type 2

The second type of complex sentence uses a subordinating conjunction in the middle of a sentence.

1) Jack lost all of his important files **when** the computer crashed.

The independent clause in this sentence takes place before the subordinating conjunction or the bold word above. So the independent clause (the simple or compound sentence) is: *Jack lost all of his important files*

This could stand alone on its own.

The dependent clause is: *when the computer crashed.*

This could not stand on its own because it begins with a subordinating conjunction, so again familiarize yourself with the list.

Notice there was not comma. You do not need the comma when the subordinating conjunction is in the middle of the sentence. However, if you write it like this:

When the computer crashed, Jack lost all his files.

In this format just above, you need the comma.

2) Let's look at another example with the subordinating conjunction in the middle and without a comma.

*Mary should receive the prize **because** she won the spelling bee.*

The independent clause is: *Mary should receive the prize*

The dependent clause is: *because she won the spelling bee*

3) *He walked down the street **as if** nothing was wrong.*

The independent clause is: *He walked down the street*

The dependent clause is: *as if nothing was wrong*