

TAMIU
 University College
 Writing
 Center

Sentence variety exercise 4

Subordinating conjunctions

One of the most common ways of joining ideas—aside from coordinating conjunctions—is using subordinating conjunctions. Here are some of the most common subordinating conjunctions and the logical connections they create:

Those that show **time**: when, while, after, since, once, until, as soon as, before, as long as

Those that show **place**: where, wherever

Those that show **contrast**: although, even though, while

Those that show **cause**: since, as, because

Those that show **condition**: if, unless, provided that, in case, assuming that

A subordinate clause is created by adding a subordinating conjunction to an independent clause:

Subordinating conjunction + independent clause = subordinate clause
Because + the bathtub overflowed = Because the bathtub overflowed

The subordinate clause is now a fragment and must be attached to an independent clause:

Subordinate clause	Independent clause
<u>Because the bathtub overflowed,</u>	<u>Carlos spent Saturday night with a wet-vac.</u>
OR	
Independent clause	Subordinate clause
<u>Carlos spent Saturday night with a wet-vac</u>	<u>because the bathtub overflowed.</u>

Punctuation

An introductory subordinate clause (a subordinate clause that comes *before* the independent clause) is always followed by a comma:

Because
Since
If
Unless + subject + verb, independent clause.
When
After
Even though

comma
↓

Example:

	comma ↓
Subordinate clause	Independent clause
<u>As Gary dropped his bowl of macaroni and cheese,</u>	<u>his mother gasped.</u>

If the subordinate clause *follows* the independent clause (a subordinate clause that comes *after* the independent clause), no comma is needed:

because

since

if

Independent clause as + subject + verb.

when

after

even though

unless

Example:

Independent clause

Subordinate clause

His mother gasped as Gary dropped his bowl of macaroni and cheese.

Because subordinate clauses can be moved to different locations in a sentence, the writer can create emphasis by placing the most important part—whether the independent or the subordinate clause—at the end of the sentence. However, if the subordinating conjunction indicates cause and effect, place the cause first and the effect second so things happen in chronological order.

Practice 1

Directions: In each sentence below, underline the subordinate clause. Then, add or delete punctuation as necessary. Not all sentences below contain a subordinate clause.

1. When, Spencer picked up the silver cuff links he knew he was going to steal them.
2. It would not be easy, because a clerk was standing in the aisle and convex mirrors hung in the corners near the ceiling.
3. As the man behind the counter turned, to answer the phone Spencer pushed the cuff links into his pocket and quickly picked up an identical pair.
4. The man hung up the phone, and smiled at Spencer.
5. “Although I really like these they’re awfully expensive,” Spencer said, as he placed the cuff links that he held in his hand on the counter and turned to go.
6. “Oh, not at all,” the man said with a smile.
7. “Because the genuine silver ones sold so quickly we could only replace them with inexpensive imitations until the next shipment arrives.”

Practice 2

Directions: On a separate sheet of paper write ten sentences, each using a different subordinating conjunction. Five of the sentences should include an *introductory* subordinate clause followed by a comma and five a subordinate clause that is *not* introductory.