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

To show **time**—when, while, after, since, once, until, as soon as, before, as long as
To show **place**—where, wherever
To show **contrast**—although, even though, while
To show **cause**—since, as, because
To 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

**Because** the bathtub overflowed, Carlos spent Saturday night with a wet-vac.

OR

Independent clause Subordinate clause

Carlos spent Saturday night with a wet-vac **because** the bathtub overflowed.

**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**

Example:

As Gary dropped his bowl of macaroni and cheese, his mother gasped.

If the subordinate clause *follows* the independent clause, **no comma** is needed:
Sentence Variety IV: Subordinating Conjunctions

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 within a sentence, the writer can emphasize the most important part—whether the independent or the subordinate clause—by placing it at the end of the sentence. However, if the subordinating conjunction indicates cause and effect, place the cause before the effect to maintain chronological order.

Practice 1  
Directions: In each sentence below, underline the subordinate clause. Then, add or delete punctuation as necessary. Not all sentences 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 the five other, a subordinate clause that is not introductory.