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**Independent & Dependent Clauses**

A clause is a group of words containing a subject and a verb. Often, we use both dependent (subordinate) and independent (main) clauses in sentences, making them more complex.

**Independent Clauses**

An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence. It contains a subject, a verb, and often an object or complement.

Examples: The eggs are rotten.

They were left out in the hot sun.

**Dependent Clauses**

A dependent clause cannot stand alone as a sentence; it must be accompanied by an independent clause. To join a dependent and independent clause in a sentence, a subordinating conjunction must be used.

*Subordinating*

*Conjunction*

Examples: Because they were left out in the hot sun, the eggs are rotten.

*Dependent Clause Independent Clause*

*Subordinating*

*Conjunction*

Although the eggs are rotten, Howard boiled them.

*Dependent Clause Independent Clause*

**Variations**

The examples above show dependent clauses placed in front of independent clauses with a subordinating conjunction (S.C.) linking the two at the beginning of the sentence. However, dependent clauses can also be placed *after* independent clauses in a sentence.

Example:

The eggs are rotten because they were left out in the hot sun.

*Independent Clause S. C. Dependent Clause*

Placing the independent clause at the beginning makes the subject clear for the reader, and the sentence is simpler and more straightforward.

**Common Subordinating Conjunctions**

The following chart is adapted from Fowler & Aaron (2010, p. 251).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cause/Effect | Condition | | Comparison /  Contrast | Purpose | Concession | Space or Time | |
| As  Because  In order that  Since  So that | Even if  If  If only  Provided  Unless | Whenever  Since  When  Whether | As  As if  As though  Rather than  While  Whether | In order that  So that  That | Although  As if  Even if  Though  Even though | After  As long as  Before  Now that  Once  Since | Until  When  Whenever  Where  Wherever  while |

The information for this handout was compiled from the following sources:

Steer, J. M., & Carlisi, K. A. (1998). *The advanced grammar book* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Fowler, H. R., & Aaron, J. E. (2010). *The little, brown handbook* (11th ed.). New York, NY: Longman.