

Complex Sentences Review

Definition: A **COMPLEX SENTENCE** is made up of an independent clause (the main clause) and one or more dependent clauses.

The **INDEPENDENT CLAUSE** has a subject and verb and can stand alone as a complete sentence. It is also called a simple sentence.

John fixed the car.

The **DEPENDENT CLAUSE** also has a subject and a verb, but it cannot stand alone. There are **two types of dependent clauses**, those that begin with *subordinating conjunctions* and those that begin with *relative pronouns*.

When John fixed the car (subordinating conjunction)

Who fixed the car (relative pronoun)

I. Dependent Clauses with *Subordinating Conjunctions*:

One type of dependent clause is introduced by a word (or words) called a *subordinating conjunction*. The clause does have a subject and a verb, but it begins with a *subordinating conjunction*. When a clause starts with a subordinating conjunction, the clause becomes **dependent**—it cannot stand alone.

The most common *subordinating conjunctions* are listed below:

* These words are also prepositions.

after*

although

as*

as if

as long as

as though

because

before*

even though

if

once

provided

since*

so that

though

till*

unless

until*

when

whenever

where

wherever

while

when

When one of these subordinating conjunctions is placed before an independent clause, the clause can no longer stand by itself. It becomes **dependent**.

Robert rode the bus to town. (independent clause)

When Robert rode the bus to town. (dependent clause)

Two Positions of Dependent Clauses with Subordinating Conjunctions:

The dependent clause can come in two places in relation to the independent clause.

Pattern 1: The dependent clause can come **first**, and **a comma is required**. The dependent clause is in *italics* below.

Example: *Until I have my first cup of coffee*, I cannot think about anything.

Pattern 2: The dependent clause can come **after** the independent clause, and **no commas are necessary**. The dependent clause is in *italics* below.

Example: I cannot think about anything *until I have my first cup of coffee*.

II. Dependent Clauses with *Relative Pronouns*:

The second type of dependent clause begins with a *relative pronoun*. Relative pronouns are listed below:

Relative Pronouns		
who	whose	which
whom	that	
<i>Sometimes: where, when, why</i>		

Two Positions of Dependent Clauses with Relative Pronouns:

The dependent clause can come in two places in relation to the independent clause, but it usually comes right after the noun that it is describing.

Position 1:

The dependent clause may come in the middle of an independent clause, especially if it relates to the subject of the independent clause. The dependent clause is in *italics*.

Example:

All cars *that have bad brakes* should be kept off the streets.

Position 2:

The dependent clause beginning with a relative pronoun may come at the end of the independent clause and may modify a noun that is a direct object, a subject complement, or the object of a preposition. The dependent clause is in *italics*.

Example:

Jeff makes promises *that he will not keep*.

Punctuation Rules:

Rule 1: When a dependent clause beginning with a relative pronoun points to a **general** noun, do **NOT** use commas. The clause is needed in the sentence to make a general noun more specific.

Example:

All cars *that have bad brakes* should be kept off the streets.

Rule 2: When a dependent clause beginning with a relative pronoun points to a **specific** noun, **DO** use commas. The clause is not needed in the sentence because it only gives extra information about a noun that is already limited and specific.

Examples:

Ed, who is in the third grade, is the biggest boy on the block.