



Dependent Clauses

Grade Six

Skill Focus

Levels of Thinking			
Remember	Understand	Apply	Create
Close Reading	Grammar		Composition
	Mechanics Punctuation Clauses Dependent/Subordinate Independent	Types (modes) Narrative	

Materials and Resources

- Grammar Foundation Lesson: “Sentence Structure Basics”

Lesson Introduction

In this lesson, students will learn about how independent clauses can become dependent clauses, what subordinating conjunctions are, and how to punctuate dependent clauses at the beginning and end of a sentence.

Practice using these structures will reveal the highly useful and interesting nature of these tools of grammar.



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A clause is a group of words that has both a subject and a verb. An independent clause can make a sentence all by itself, but a dependent clause cannot. In the same way, adults are most often independent (can survive on their own) while children are dependent (need the help of an adult in order to survive). Think of the independent clause as an adult holding the hand of a child (the dependent clause) crossing the street.

Among the simplest kinds of independent clauses is one containing just an article, a noun, and a verb, all forming a sentence that can stand alone.

The dog howled.

However, if you add certain words to the beginning of an independent clause, it turns into a dependent clause; that is, it cannot stand alone as a sentence any more. Many of these words are called subordinating conjunctions.

Some subordinating conjunctions are the following:

after	before	as
because	wherever	since
although	whenever	even though
when	until	though
unless	while	if

Let's try this with the independent clause above.

After the dog howled...

Because the dog howled...

Although the dog howled...

Even though the clauses still have subjects and verbs, they can't stand alone as a sentence. They are now *dependent clauses*. They leave the reader with some questions that can only be answered by another independent clause. Depending on which subordinating conjunction is used, the meaning of the sentence changes.

Below are some examples of ways that students your age have completed the sentences that begin with a dependent clause.

Though the dog howled, it wasn't very loud.

After the dog howled, the man stood in horror.

As the dog howled, the wolves joined in.

Because the dog howled, the windows shattered.

Before the dog howled, the full moon gleamed peacefully.



If the dog howled, the Siamese cat would run away.

Since the dog howled, the baby awoke.

Unless the dog howled, the coyotes would gather.

Until the dog howled, the evening was still.

Wherever the dog howled, his echo would follow.

Whenever the dog howled, everyone covered their ears.

While the dog howled, the puppies watched in awe.

(Abel Araya and Michael Peterson, Grade 6)

Notice that the students who wrote the sentences above placed a comma after a dependent clause that comes at the beginning of a sentence.

They could also have placed the dependent clause at the end of the sentence, in which case the meaning would not change, but a comma would not be needed.

The wolves joined in as the dog howled.

The windows shattered because the dog howled.

The Siamese cat would run away if the dog howled.

Activity

1. Try writing your own sentences, using the following subject and verb to form your dependent clauses. Try beginning all of your sentences with the dependent clauses (be sure to add commas) and following them with independent clauses that complete the sentence. Independent Clause – *The girl danced.*

a. After the girl danced,

b. Because the girl danced,

c. Although the girl danced,

d. When the girl danced,

e. Unless the girl danced,

f. Whenever the girl danced,

g. Until the girl danced,

h. Wherever the girl danced,

i. Since the girl danced,

- j. Even though the girl danced,
 - k. If the girl danced,
 - l. While the girl danced,
2. Reverse the order of the sentences, putting the independent clause first, then the dependent clause. Remember, no comma is necessary when the dependent clause ends the sentence.
 3. If your sentences make a story, read it to the class.