

Types of Clauses

Independent vs. Dependent Clauses

A **clause** is a group of words containing a subject and verb. There are two types of clauses:

- An independent clause is a simple sentence that can stand on its own.
Examples: She is hungry.
I am feeling well today.
- A dependent clause cannot stand on its own. It needs an independent clause to complete a sentence. Dependent clauses often begin with such words as *although, since, if, when,* and *because*.
Examples: Although she is hungry . . .
Whoever is hungry . . .
Because I am feeling well . . .

Dependent	Independent
Although she is hungry,	she will give him some of her food.
Whatever they decide,	I will agree to.

Connecting Independent Clauses

There are two types of words that can be used as connectors at the beginning of an independent clause: coordinating conjunctions and independent marker words.

- **Coordinating conjunctions**
The seven coordinating conjunctions used as connecting words at the beginning of an independent clause are *and, but, for, or, nor, so,* and *yet*. When the second independent clause in a sentence begins with a coordinating conjunction, a comma is needed before the coordinating conjunction:
Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz, but it was hard to concentrate because of the noise.
- **Independent marker words**
An independent marker word is a connecting word used at the beginning of an independent clause. *Also, consequently, furthermore, however, moreover, nevertheless,* and *therefore* always begin a sentence that can stand alone. When the second independent clause in a sentence has an independent marker word, a semicolon is needed before the independent marker word:

Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz; however, it was hard to concentrate because of the noise.

Practice Exercises

In the blank below the sentence, write whether the underlined clause is independent or dependent.

1. The teacher who lives next door to Rob is Mrs. Johnson.

2. Our dog will run away if the gate is left open.

3. Because the storm knocked out the power, school will be canceled on Thursday.

4. This is the homework assignment that you missed last week.

5. The movie was excellent; moreover, it was just the right length.

6. Victoria heard what her sister said, but she ignored it.

7. The moon shimmered on the ocean when the wind rippled the waves.

8. At the end of his class, Jim walked to his locker where the coach was waiting.

Sources and Further Reading/Practice:

Kaufman, Lester, Tom Stern, and Jane Straus. *The Blue Book of Grammar and Pronunciation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014.

Purdue OWL. "Identifying Independent and Dependent Clauses." Accessed February 22, 2014. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/598/01/>.

K12 Reader. "Is It an Independent Clause or a Dependent Clause?" Accessed April 19, 2014. <http://www.k12reader.com/worksheet/is-it-an-independent-clause-or-a-dependent-clause/>.