

Adverb Clauses

Classes of Adverb Clauses

Adverb clauses are dependent clauses that answer the questions **why, where, and when, under what conditions, or to what degree** the action in the main clause took place. The various classes of adverb clauses are place, time, cause, purpose, condition, and concession. The verb in the adverbial clause should match that of the main clause (i.e. both present tense or both past tense), except in conditional and concession clauses, where the tense may not match. For example, “unless someone borrowed it, the book is missing,” (conditional) and “although he had attended the lectures, he still does not understand the material” (concession), which use both present and past tense verbs in the same sentence.

Position and Punctuation of Adverb Clauses

Adverb clauses occur after a subordinating conjunction, which is a word that connects an independent clause to a dependent clause. The position of the adverb clause itself in the sentence is flexible. If the adverb clause precedes the independent clause, a comma is used to connect the two. Concession clauses can use a comma whether the adverb clause precedes or follows the main clause.

For example: “she slept when she was tired” versus “when she was tired, she slept”

The adverbial clause in this sentence (“when she was tired”) expresses the time at which the action of the main clause (“she slept”) took place. The subordinating conjunction (“when” in the example) is always placed at the beginning of the adverb clause regardless of where the clause is in the sentence. Below, the main clause is in italics, the adverb clause is underlined, and the subordinating conjunction is in bold:

*She slept **when** she was tired.*

When she was tired, *she slept.*

Overview of Adverb Clauses

| Class | Main Subordinating Conjunctions | Example Sentence (adverb clause underlined) |
|-------|--|---|
| Place | where, anywhere, wherever, as far as | <i>Wherever he went, he knew how to get home.</i> |
| Time | when, anytime, whenever, before, while, after, until, since, just as, as soon as, as long as, now that | <i>She drank tea <u>while she was writing</u>.</i> |
| Cause | because, as, that, for | <i>They were late <u>because they missed the bus</u>.</i> |

| Class | Main Subordinating Conjunctions | Example Sentence (adverb clause underlined) |
|------------|---|--|
| Purpose | so that, in order that, in order to | He brought extra cookies <u>so that he could share them with his friends</u> . |
| Condition | unless, if, whether, if . . . not, on the condition that, as long as, provided that | <u>If they did not already buy tickets</u> , they will miss the show. |
| Concession | even though, although | <u>Even though she cleans often</u> , her apartment is usually messy. |

Practice Exercises

Underline the adverbial clause and identify its class. Add a comma where necessary.

1. She is walking slowly even though she is in a hurry.
2. As long as they do not notice it will not change.
3. Because he lost his phone he didn't get their call.
4. We will drive you as far as you need to go.
5. I am meeting her where we had dinner before.
6. If we read this article we can understand the issue.
7. Although the problem was difficult he solved it.
8. You won't find out until later.
9. She would have been angry if they had said no.
10. There is a spooky house where the street ends.

Combine each of the following sentence pairs into a single sentence consisting of a main clause and adverb clause. Use the subordinating conjunctions listed above.

1. I had to take my dog to the vet. He was ill.
2. We can attend the conference. We must pay registration fees to go.
3. My thesis is almost complete. It's taking much longer to write than I imagined.
4. She hid somewhere. The police could not find her.
5. I started my own business. I could be my own boss.
6. The chores are done. We can go to the park.

Sources and Further Reading/Practice:

Sinclair Community College. "The Adverb Clause." Accessed May 26, 2015.

http://www.sinclair.edu/centers/tlc/pub/handouts_worksheets/grammar_punctuation_writing_clause_adverb.pdf

University of Illinois, The Center for Writing Studies. "Grammar Handbook: Adjective, Adverb, and Noun Clauses." Accessed May 26, 2015. <http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/writers/nounclauses/>

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<http://advancegrammar.blogspot.com/2009/09/adverb-clause.html>