

Independent and Dependent Clauses

Review: A **clause** is a group of words that has a **subject** and a **verb**.

The difference between an independent and a dependent clause is the type of word it starts with.

A **dependent clause starts with a subordinator word** such as “when,” “if” or “which.”

Examples: When Ronnie gets here,
 If Denise comes to class late,
 which I bought last weekend

An **independent clause** can stand alone as a separate sentence and **does not start with a subordinator**.

Examples: Let’s start the music.
 I’ll tell her the assignment.
 The battery is defective.

Every sentence must have at least one independent clause.

A **dependent clause** is combined with an **independent clause** to make a longer sentence.

Examples: When Ronnie gets here, let’s start the music.
 If Denise comes to class late, I’ll tell her the assignment.
 The battery which I bought last weekend is defective.

These example sentences with two clauses are called **complex sentences**. They have **both an independent and a dependent clause**.

Sometimes **two independent clauses** are put together to make a longer sentence. This is done with a comma and a FANBOYS conjunction.

Examples: Dogs bark, **and** cats meow.
 The weather is beautiful today, **so** I’ll take a walk.

These examples are called **compound sentences**.

A sentence can be both compound and complex.

Example: When cats meow, dogs bark, and birds chirp.

More about Subordinators and Dependent Clauses

Subordinators such as “if,” “when,” “since,” “because,” and “although,” start **adverb dependent clauses**.

Examples: **Since** the cat is meowing, the dog is barking.
 I'll take a walk **because** the weather is beautiful.
 I smashed my car into an oak tree **after** I went to the store.

Exercise: In the following sentences underline each **adverb dependent clause**.

1. Because I partied all weekend, I never found time to do my homework.
2. I hate to drink coffee because it always upsets my stomach.
3. When you win the lottery, you can buy me dinner.
4. Although I don't remember his name, I'm sure that man is a famous actor.
5. As I was walking down Broadway, a police car jumped the curb and ran over my cat.
6. After I graduate from TVI, I hope to work as a nurse at Lovelace hospital.
7. You will never be a good student if you do not study.
8. The train was racing through the city as the evening sun went down.
9. This assignment is easy if you have taken a grammar course.

Subordinators such as “who,” “which,” “that,” and “whom” start **adjective dependent clauses**.

Examples: My cat, **who** is soft and sweet, hates dogs.
 The Furr's **that** is on the corner has been robbed five times.
 The weather, **which** is beautiful, makes me want to take a walk.

Exercise: In the following sentences underline each **adjective dependent clause**.

1. John Smith, who was an early English explorer, is most famous for his love for the Native American girl Pocahontas.
2. TVI, which is the only community college in Albuquerque, is now offering courses in computer science.

3. A mule, which is the cross between a horse and a donkey, is known for being stubborn.
4. Money that is gained dishonestly spends just like money that is earned honestly. (2 dependent clauses)
5. I like to drink beer at Duffy's, which is my favorite hangout.
6. The man in the blue shirt, whom I first met in Canada at an AA conference, is the speaker tonight.
7. Money, which is often called the root of all evil, is good to have.
8. The high school that you attended must have had a wonderful English program.
9. The woman who has the orange hair is my dear mother.

Sometimes adjective dependent clauses do not start with a subordinator.
Sentence #8 above could read

The high school **you attended** must have had a wonderful English program.

In sentence #9 the dependent clause could be changed to a prepositional phrase:

The woman with the orange hair is my dear mother.

Then the sentence has only one clause, an independent clause.

Please remember that a **dependent clause** is not considered a complete thought and cannot be a sentence by itself. A dependent clause is a **sentence fragment** if it is not connected to an independent clause.