Success Center
Directed Learning Activity (DLA)

Subordinating Conjunctions

G006.1
Directed Learning Activity – Subordinating Conjunctions

Description: In this Directed Learning Activity (DLA), you will learn how to combine sentences with subordinating conjunctions. This skill will enable you to more clearly communicate the relationships between the ideas in your sentences.

Prior Knowledge: This DLA assumes a working knowledge of independent clauses and dependent clauses. If you haven’t covered these important topics in class this semester, the Success Center recommends completing the DLA “Types of Sentences: Complex and Compound-Complex” before attempting this activity.

Materials: You should have a sample of your own writing, so you can review the sentences in it.

Step One: Understanding the Role of Subordinating Conjunctions in Complex Sentences
A complex sentence is created by combining a dependent clause with an independent clause that completes its meaning.

**Dependent Clause:**
Although the cafeteria is closed for cleaning today.

**Independent Clause:**
It will be open tomorrow.

**Complex Sentence:**
Although the cafeteria is closed for cleaning today, it will be open tomorrow.

In this complex sentence, there is a close relationship between the two items about the cafeteria. In fact, left alone, the dependent clause is only a sentence fragment that expresses an incomplete thought; the independent clause completes that thought.

The subordinating conjunction at the beginning of the dependent clause describes the relationship between the idea communicated by it and the idea communicated by the independent clause. In the example above, although establishes a contrast between the facts that the cafeteria is closed today, but that it will be open tomorrow.

The most common subordinating conjunctions are listed in the table below, organized by the types of relationships between ideas they describe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Between Ideas</th>
<th>Subordinating Conjunctions</th>
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When the one of these subordinating conjunctions – and, thus, the dependent clause – is at the beginning of a complex sentence, you should always insert a comma before the independent clause (as in the example above).

**Identify the dependent clauses and the subordinating conjunctions in these complex sentences. First, write the dependent clause on the blank line below each sentence. Then, put parentheses – ( ) – around the subordinating conjunction. The first one is done for you.**

1. Because her dog was hungry, Jessica opened a can of dog food.

**(Because)** her dog was hungry

Remember: Because it begins with a subordinating conjunction, a dependent clause cannot stand on its own. It needs an independent clause to complete the thought it starts to express. **Because her dog was hungry** is the dependent clause in this complex sentence because it cannot stand on its own. It needs the independent clause **Jessica opened a can of dog food** to complete the thought it starts to express – that is, to explain what Jessica did **because her was hungry**.

2. Even though the student practiced her writing everyday, she still felt uneasy about it.

3. We need to make sure that we leave early enough because there is a test in our history class today.
4. My history class is in the Humanities Building whereas my English class is in the Liberal Arts Building.

5. Since there is no room in the library, we need to go to the Success Center to study.

6. Whenever I need help, I seek tutoring in the Success Center.

7. You can do the extra credit in the art history class as long as you have completed all of the regular work on time.

8. Sam will work with his study group until he passes English 100.

9. Before you drop the class, you should meet with your professor and find out how you can make up the missed work.

What process did you use to decide which clauses were the dependent clauses in your answers above? How did you identify which words were the subordinating conjunctions?

Step Two: Selecting the Best Subordinating Conjunction to Combine Clauses

Referring to the table on pages 1 and 2, select the best subordinating conjunctions to express the relationships between the ideas in the dependent clauses and independent clauses in the complex sentences below. The first one is done for you.
1. Although it was very hot outside, Jan wore a thick coat.

   Here, you want a subordinating conjunction that communicates the contrast between what the temperature is and what Jan is wearing. Typically, you would expect someone not to wear a thick coat when it is hot outside. Although is one of the subordinating conjunctions in the table above that expresses a contrasting relationship between ideas.

2. _________ the football team won its playoff game, it will now go to the state championship.

3. _________ it is time to participate in their extracurricular activities, students procrastinate on doing their homework.

4. It is not necessary to buy your books before the first day of class _________ your teacher requests that you do.

5. _________ the class if over, you should go to the lab right away.

6. John always takes a jacket with him _________ he never knows how the weather will be.

7. Jane has been taking gymnastics lessons _________ she was six years old.

8. _________Susan was eligible for Biology 101, she was unable to get in the class.

9. There will be no after school activities today _________ the teachers all have a meeting.

10. You cannot take any classes for your major _________ you take all of you basic education first.

11. _________ you complete your basic education, feel free to sign up for any class you want.

What strategy did you use to select the best subordinating conjunctions to complete the complex sentences above?

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Step Three: Creating Your Own Complex Sentences

Compose four complex sentences. Write two sentences start with dependent clauses and two that conclude with them.

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Step Four: Applying What You Have Learned to Your Own Writing

Read through a sample of your own writing. (If you don’t have one with you, compose a one-paragraph description of the Success Center on a separate piece of paper.) Identify at least two opportunities in it for combining clauses with subordinating conjunctions in order to create complex sentences. Which subordinating conjunctions would you use to communicate the relationships between the clauses in the resulting sentences?

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Step Five: Reflecting on What You Have Learned
Before sharing your work with a tutor or an instructor, reflect on your learning. What did you learn as you advanced through this activity? How do you know that you comprehend the skill of using subordinating conjunctions to create complex sentences?

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In Step One, the student identified the dependent clauses and subordinating conjunctions in the complex sentences.

In Step Two, the student selected appropriate subordinating conjunctions to express the relationships between the ideas expressed in dependent clauses and independent clauses and explained why he/she chose those particular subordinating conjunctions.

In Step Three, the student composed four complex sentences – two that start with dependent clauses and two that conclude with them.

In Step Four, the student identified at least two opportunities in his/her own writing for combining clauses with subordinating conjunctions in order to create complex sentences.

In Step Five, the student responded thoughtfully and thoroughly to the reflection prompt.

Additional Comments:

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STUDENT – DO NOT FORGET TO TURN THIS SHEET IN AT THE FRONT DESK!

You may not get credit for completing this DLA if you fail to leave this sheet with the front desk receptionist.