

Subordination: The Complex Sentence

It is crucial that you memorize and be able to recognize the common subordinating conjunctions and not confuse them with the coordinating conjunctions and/or the conjunctive adverbs. Here is a list of the most common subordinating conjunctions:

after, although, as, as if, as though, because, before, even though, if, since, so that, though, unless, until, when, whenever, where, whereas, wherever, whether, while

There are many other subordinating conjunctions you will discover as you use start them in your writing, but this list will do as a good start.

There are two ways to use subordinating conjunctions properly:

Method 1

- If the subordinating conjunction is the very first word in a sentence, then you must use a comma at the end of the dependent clause (the clause that cannot stand alone):
Because Michelle woke up late, she missed her appointment.

Method 2

- If the subordinating conjunction is not the very first word in the sentence, then you must not use a comma at all:
Michelle missed her appointment because she woke up late.

Associated Terms:

Dependent clause: a group of words that contains a subject, a verb, and a subordinating conjunction. Unlike an independent clause, a dependent clause cannot stand alone and make sense; therefore, it is “*dependent*” upon the independent clause it is joined with. A dependent clause that is not joined with an independent clause is a fragment because it does not make sense by itself—it lacks a complete idea. The phrase “dependent clause” is also sometimes referred to as a “subordinate clause” because of the subordinating conjunction it contains:

Dependent clause= subordinate clause.