

Understanding the Point of Compound and Complex Sentences: One Student Writer's Response

The following paragraph offers one writer's thoughts about the differences among sentence types.

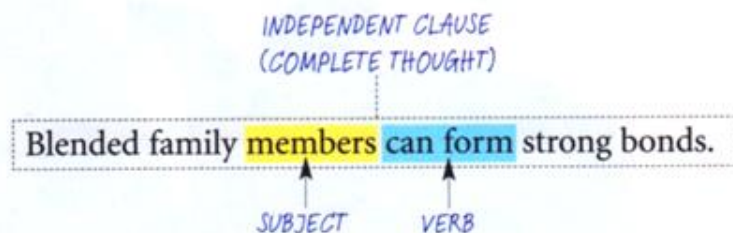
First, I found the subjects and verbs in each sentence. In the first sentence, a compound subject states one idea. The second sentence gives two different ideas. Third sentence mixes two ideas about one subject. The fourth sentence is made up of several ideas. I want to know why the commas and semicolons are used in sentences 2 and 4. The four types of sentences are four different ways to say something.

Applying the Point: Compound and Complex Sentences

A **clause** is a group of related words that includes a subject and a verb. Two types of clauses provide the basis of all sentences: the (1) **independent clause** and the (2) **dependent clause**.

1. The Independent Clause

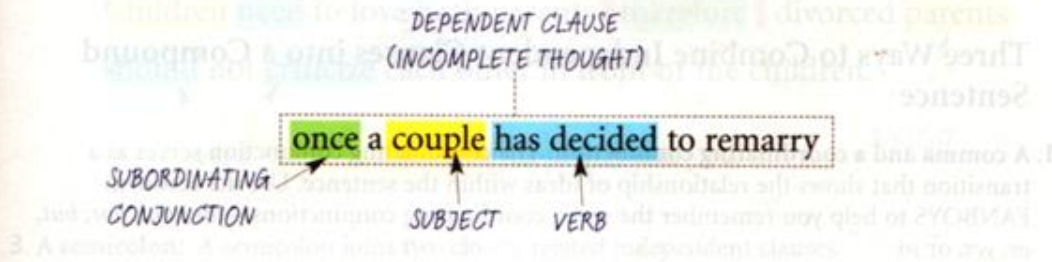
A focused and complete thought expressed with a subject and a verb; also known as a *main clause* or **simple sentence**.



2. The Dependent Clause

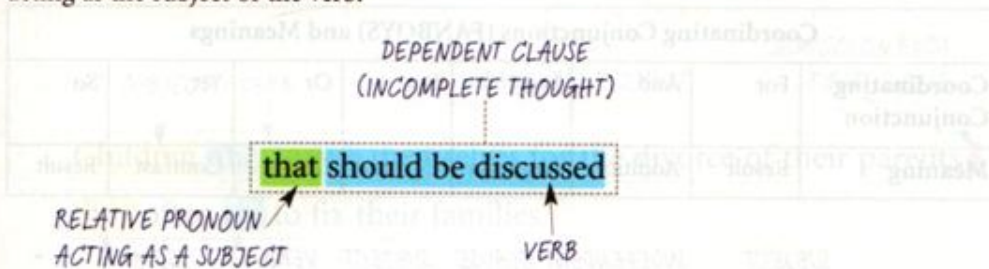
(1) An incomplete thought expressed with a subject and a verb marked by a subordinating conjunction such as *after*, *before*, or *when*.

For more about subordinating conjunctions, see page 163.



(2) An incomplete thought marked by a relative pronoun, such as *who* or *which*, acting as the subject of the verb.

For more about relative pronouns, see page 164.



TYPES OF CLAUSES

Identify each of the following clauses as **I** for independent or **D** for dependent. *Hint*: Circle subordinating conjunctions and relative pronouns.

- I** 1. Older children may feel left out.
- D** 2. **When** a new baby comes into a blended family.
- D** 3. Children **who** live in blended families.
- D** 4. **If** they can be with both biological parents.
- I** 5. Children of blended families can adjust and thrive.

A Compound Sentence

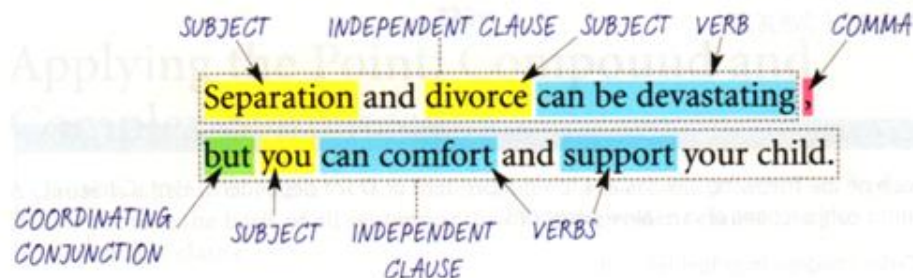
A compound sentence is made up of two or more independent clauses. A **compound sentence** links two or more independent clauses together as **equally important** ideas through one of three methods.

Three Ways to Combine Independent Clauses into a Compound Sentence

1. **A comma and a coordinating conjunction:** The coordinating conjunction serves as a transition that shows the relationship of ideas within the sentence. Use the acronym FANBOYS to help you remember the seven coordinating conjunctions—*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, or so*.

[Independent clause,] **and** [independent clause.]

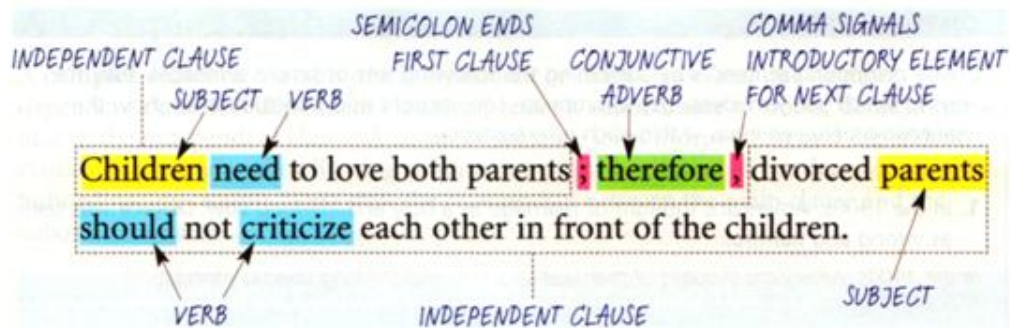
Coordinating Conjunctions (FANBOYS) and Meanings							
Coordinating Conjunction	For	And	Nor	But	Or	Yet	So
Meaning	Result	Addition	Negation	Contrast	Choice	Contrast	Result



2. **A semicolon, conjunctive adverb, and a comma:** The conjunction shows the relationship of ideas within the sentence. In addition, the conjunctive adverb introduces the next clause. A comma follows the conjunctive adverb since it is an introductory element of the next clause:

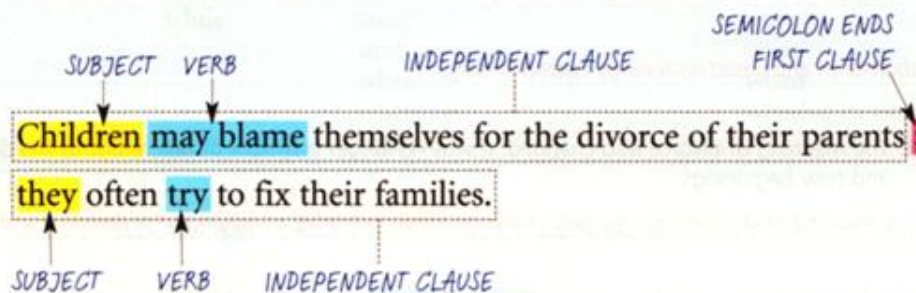
[Independent clause;] **therefore,** [independent clause.]

Common Conjunctive Adverbs and the Relationships They Express					
Addition	Cause or Effect	Comparison or Contrast	Example	Emphasis	Time
also	accordingly	however	for example	certainly	finally
besides	as a result	in comparison	for instance	indeed	meanwhile
further	consequently	in contrast		in fact	next
furthermore	hence	instead		still	then
in addition	therefore	likewise		undoubtedly	thereafter
incidentally	thus	nevertheless			
moreover		nonetheless			
		otherwise			
		similarly			



3. A semicolon: A semicolon joins two closely related independent clauses.

[Independent clause] ; [independent clause.]



COMPOUND SENTENCES

Insert the proper punctuation in each of the following compound sentences. **Hint:** Identify the subjects and verbs. Place parentheses around (prepositional phrases); underline the subject once; underline the verb twice.

1. A divorce creates a painful loss for everyone; parents and children need time to mourn the loss (of the family).
2. Parents should sit down together and talk (with their children) so both parents can comfort them and promise to be there for them.
3. Eventually, a divorced parent will likely remarry; as a result, a new blended family faces several challenges.
4. Only the biological parent should discipline his or her children, and the same rules apply to all the children (of the same age).
5. A blended family (of biological and step children) is a new start for everyone; therefore, the new family should create new family traditions such as a family movie night once a month.
6. Write a compound sentence. Suggested topic: Family traditions. *Answers may vary.*

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For more information on how to identify subjects, verbs, and prepositional phrases, see page 152.

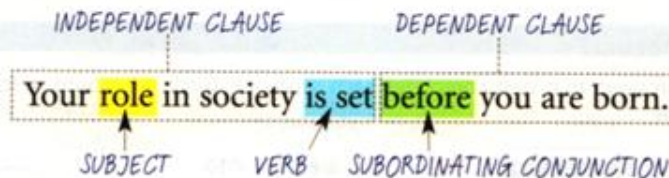
A Complex Sentence

A **complex sentence** contains one independent or main clause and one or more dependent clauses. A **dependent clause** expresses a **subordinate** or minor detail about an idea in the independent clause. A complex sentence joins independent and dependent clauses by placing a subordinating conjunction at the beginning of the dependent clause. **Subordinating conjunctions** state the relationship between the main clause and the subordinate clause.

Subordinating Conjunctions and the Relationships They Express				
Cause as because in order that now that since so	Contrast although as if even though though whereas while	Time after as as long as before once since until when whenever while	Place where wherever	Condition even if how if only if that unless what when whether or not

Critical Thinking Teaching Tip:

Some subordinating conjunctions can also be other parts of speech: Kendra was sick before. ("before" is an adverb describing the verb "was.") Kendra was sick before her test. ("before" is a preposition with the object "test.") What other subordinating conjunctions can also be other parts of speech?



COMPLEX SENTENCES

Underline the dependent clauses in each sentence. In the blank after each sentence, state the relationship between the dependent clause and the main clause.

- Society was waiting to teach you how you are to act as a boy or a girl. condition
- Whether you were born rich, poor, or middle-class, your status also affects your role in society. condition
- Although you occupy a status or a position, you play a role. contrast
- A father fulfills his role by providing food, shelter, and love because of his status as a parent. cause
- Write a complex sentence using a subordinating conjunction. State the relationship between your dependent and main clauses. Suggested topic: Traits of a good father.

Answers may vary.

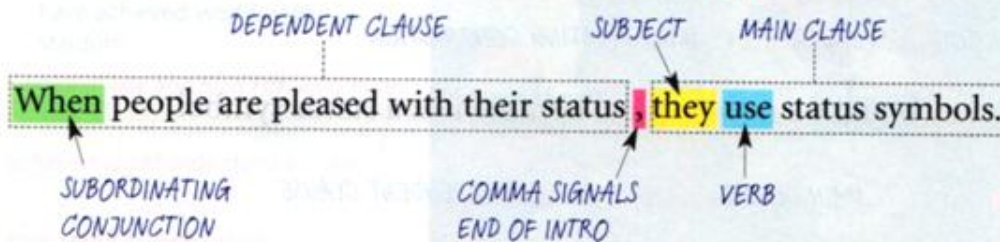
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Placement and Punctuation of a Dependent Clause within a Complex Sentence

1. **Before the main clause:** A dependent clause at the beginning of a sentence acts as an introductory element and must be set off with a comma.

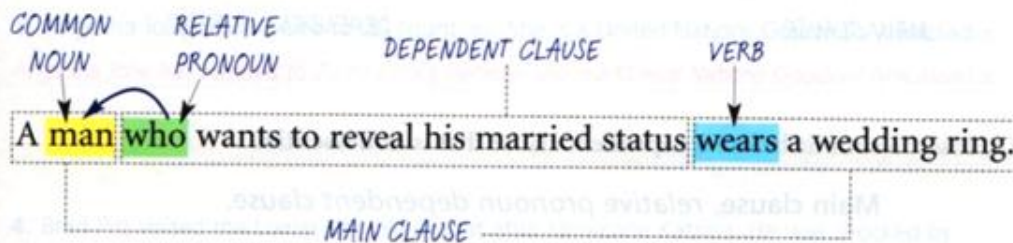
Subordinating conjunction dependent clause, **main clause.**



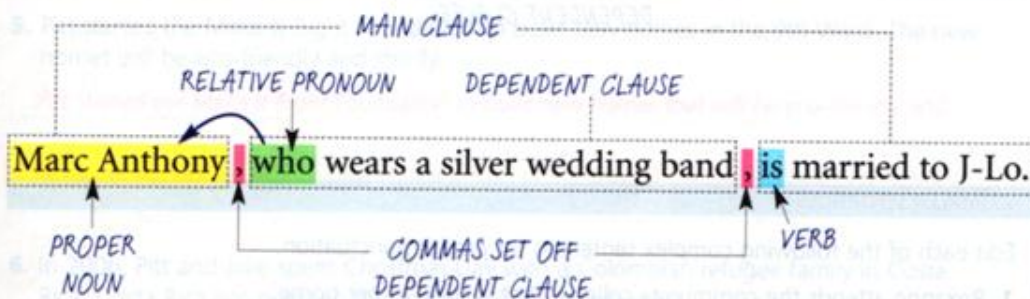
2. **In the middle of the main clause:** The context of the clause controls the use of commas. Many dependent clauses in the middle of a sentence are **relative clauses**. Relative clauses are either essential or nonessential.

(a) If the dependent clause adds information **essential** to the meaning of the sentence, no commas are needed. Most often, essential information limits or restricts the meaning of a common noun such as *man* or *woman*.

Main relative pronoun dependent clause **clause.**



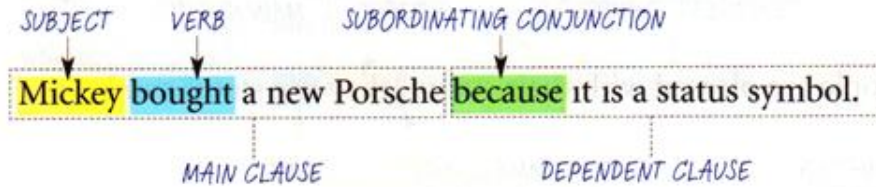
- (b) If the dependent clause adds information that is **nonessential** to the meaning of the main clause, insert commas before and after the dependent clause. Usually a nonessential clause describes a proper noun.



3. **After the main clause:** The context of the clause controls the use of commas in these instances:

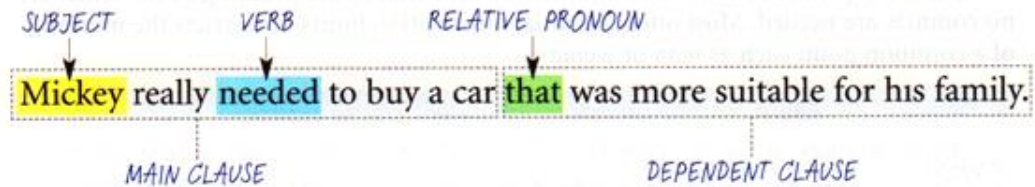
- (a) If the dependent clause begins with a **subordinating conjunction**, no comma is needed.

Main clause subordinating conjunction dependent clause.



- (b) If the dependent clause begins with a relative pronoun, determine if the information is essential or nonessential. An **essential** dependent clause does not need a comma.

Main clause dependent clause.



- (c) Insert a comma before a dependent clause that is **nonessential**.

Main clause, relative pronoun dependent clause.



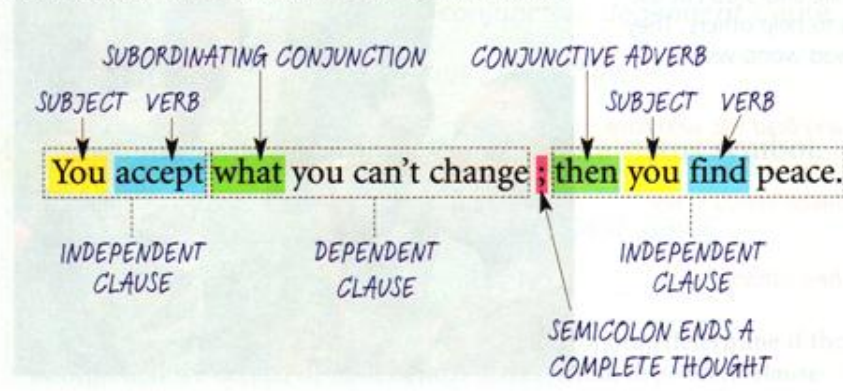
COMPLEX SENTENCES

Edit each of the following complex sentences for proper punctuation.

- 1 Roxanne attends the community college/ that is close to her home.
2. Roxanne, who is majoring in music and dance, wants to be like Jennifer Lopez.
3. Few people/ who train in music and dance/ achieve the status of Lopez.

A Compound-Complex Sentence

A **compound-complex sentence** is two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. A compound-complex sentence joins coordinate and subordinate ideas into a single sentence. All the punctuation rules for both compound and complex sentences apply to the compound-complex sentence.



COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES

Create and properly punctuate four compound-complex sentences by combining the following simple sentences. Discuss your work with a classmate or with a small group of peers.

Answers may vary.

- Deidra needs to understand. She can only change herself. She can't change other people.

Deidra needs to understand that she can only change herself; she can't change other people.

- Deidra doesn't like her job. She must be the one to make a change. She could look for another job or learn how to cope with conflict.

If Deidra doesn't like her job, she must be the one to make a change; for example, she could look for another job or learn how to cope with conflict.

- Deidra is afraid. She is afraid of failure and rejection. She doesn't take chances. She doesn't trust others easily.

Deidra, who is afraid of failure and rejection, doesn't take chances, and she doesn't trust others easily.

- Her distrust makes her seem unfriendly. Her attitude offends others. She has achieved the status of disgruntled employee.

Her distrust makes her seem unfriendly, and her attitude offends others; as a result, she has achieved the status of disgruntled employee.

Works Cited

Henry, D. J. "Subjects, Verbs, and Simple Sentences." *Writing for Life: Sentences and Paragraphs*. Boston: Longman, 2011. 150-68. Print.