

Complex Sentences



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Complex sentences are...

Sentences about complicated subjects such as quantum theory.

Sentences written by people with psychological problems.

Sentences containing a main clause and at least one subordinate clause.



Do you remember what complex sentences are?

They are sentences that contain a main clause and at least one subordinate clause.

For example:

After waking up late, Sam missed his bus.

In this lesson we will look at ways of punctuating complex sentences.



The following words are useful when you are combining clauses to make complex sentences:

when	if	after	unless
before	although	until	though
because	while	since	

When these words begin the sentence then a comma should be placed after the clause they introduce.

For example:

Although she was exhausted, Sarah was determined to carry on.



Decide where a comma should be added to these sentences:

If you are tired, you should have a rest.

Before you can watch TV, you must do your homework.

Unless you practise, you won't pass your music exam.

Because she was ill, Sally couldn't play outside.



As you become more skilled at English you will experiment with different ways of forming sentences.

You may decide to put a clause beginning with 'when' etc. in the middle of the sentence.

In that case you will need **two** commas. For example:

- He said that, if he had time, he would mow the grass.
- The instructor insisted that, before she could take lessons, she had to obtain a license.
- Bill knew that, unless he stopped talking, the teacher would give him a detention.



If you put the subordinate clause at the end of the sentence, you don't need any commas at all.

For example:

- The play will be cancelled if no more tickets are sold.
- I will tell Sir unless you stop it.
- I never stop my homework until it is completely finished.



Click on the arrows to work through eight sentences.

Punctuate each one by adding commas where necessary. Some do not need any commas at all.

Click on the eye to reveal each answer.



Write five complex sentences. Leave the punctuation out. Swap with a friend and have them add the punctuation.

Remember

- Commas usually mark off groups of words introduced by when, after, before, until, while, since, if, unless, although, though, because.
- If the group comes at the start of the sentence the comma comes after them.
- If they come in the middle they are surrounded by commas.
- If they come at the end, no commas are needed.



Verbs tell us about actions, e.g. He closed the door.

Adverbs tell us how actions are done, e.g. He closed the door **quickly**.

Sometimes we write a group of words to tell us more about the verb, e.g. He closed the door quickly **because he was afraid the rain would get in**.

These groups of words are called **adverbial clauses**.

They help us to understand more about an action.

They explain about... where, when, why, how, how much.

They make our writing more precise and informative.



Adverbial clauses are often introduced by these words (called Subordinating Conjunctions):

before

although

after

where

because

when

while

for

as

unless

until





Join these main clauses and subordinate clauses by adding one of these words:



although where when while until because

1. I hate school uniform it is very practical.
2. I used to like it I became fashion conscious.
3. I suppose I have to wear it I am at this school.
4. I only wear it if I don't I'll get done.
5. I won't wear it I leave.
6. Then I will go to college you don't have to wear one.





Notice how each time the **subordinate clause**, which is an adverbial clause in these sentences, tells us more about the idea in the main clause.

So, for example, we know that the pupil does wear the uniform (I only wear it) and then we learn *why* s/he wears it (because if I don't I'll get done).

You can *usually* also place the subordinating conjunction (the linking word) at the start of the sentence. For example,

Although it is very practical, I hate school uniform.

Until I became fashion conscious, I used to like wearing it.

While I am at this school, I suppose I shall have to wear it.



Write five sentences using subordinating conjunctions in the middle of the sentence. Then rewrite them with the conjunction at the beginning.

Do you need to make any changes to the sentences?

You can use adverbial clauses in creative writing, giving more detail about what somebody is doing.

They are also useful in formal writing, when you are giving your opinions or exploring an issue.



Write a paragraph giving your opinions on one of the following topics:

- fox hunting
- experiments on animals
- UFO's
- war.

Use these words to link your main ideas and additional information:

after, although, as, because, before, for, unless, until, when, where, while.

