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**SSC - 245**

## **Independent vs. Dependent Clauses**

**Overview:** Understanding independent and dependent clauses will help you write more clearly and avoid common errors such as fragments, run-on sentences, and comma splices. It will also help you to create sentences that are more complex. This will allow you to employ a variety of sentence types and make your writing more interesting.

**Independent clauses** are independent—they can stand alone. In other words, independent clauses can be complete sentences. They contain a *subject* and a **verb** and express a complete thought. With the right punctuation, they can be combined with dependent clauses, phrases, and other independent clauses to create complex and compound sentences.

### Examples of independent clauses:

- 1) *Jason* **is** tired.
- 2) *Lolita* **had** coffee with breakfast.
- 3) Frequent *studying* **helps** college students earn better grades.

**Dependent Clauses** (sometimes called Subordinate Clauses) contain a subject and a verb, but do not express a complete thought. Dependent clauses *depend* on an independent clause to form a complete sentence. They cannot stand alone.

Dependent clauses are easily recognizable because they begin with a subordinating conjunction such as one of the following: after, before, until, when, although, because, if, since, as, in order to, when, while, even though.

The above is not a complete list, but shows some of the most common subordinating conjunctions.

### Examples of dependent clauses attached to independent clauses:

- 1) Jason is tired **because** he only slept for five hours last night.
- 2) Lolita had coffee with breakfast **after** she realized she was out of tea.
- 3) **Since** frequent studying helps college students earn better grades, students can often be found working together in the library.

Notice that when the **subordinating conjunction** occurs at the beginning of the sentence, there is a comma after the **dependent clause**. When the **subordinating conjunction** occurs *after* the **independent clause** (in the middle of the sentence), a comma is not necessary.

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**Practice:** Now look at your own writing. Focus on one paragraph, and locate independent clauses and dependent clauses in that paragraph. Do you have several independent clauses standing alone as simple sentences? Find two simple sentences and combine them by adding a dependent word to one of them, and add a comma if necessary. Make sure, however, that the sentences in your paragraph are not all the same type. Try putting the dependent clause at the beginning of some sentences and the end of others. Remember that variety makes writing more interesting.

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