Combining Independent & Dependent Clauses

According to the Purdue OWL, an independent clause is “a group of words that contains a subject and verb and expresses a complete thought.” A dependent clause is “a group of words that contains a subject and verb but does not express a complete thought.”

Combining Two Independent Clauses

Use a comma before the coordinating conjunctions (connecting words) listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>and</th>
<th>but</th>
<th>for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td>nor</td>
<td>yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example: *I was tired after working all day, so I decided to go to bed early.*

Use a semicolon between two independent clauses with no coordinating conjunction.

Independent clause ; independent clause.

Example: *I was tired from working all day; I decided to go to bed early.*

Use a semicolon before and a comma after the conjunctive adverbs (connecting words) listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>accordingly</th>
<th>also</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>besides</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consequently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>furthermore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>however</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moreover</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nevertheless</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>otherwise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>therefore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>still</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent clause, | independent clause.

Example: *I was tired from working all day; therefore, I decided to go to bed early.*
Combining Independent Clauses with Dependent Clauses

When the dependent clause begins with a subordinating conjunction (connecting word) and precedes the independent clause, separate the clauses with a comma.

- After
- Although
- Even though
- Though
- As
- As if
- As though
- As long as
- Because
- Before
- If
- So/So that
- Since
- Until
- Whatever
- When
- Whenever
- Where
- Wherever
- Whether
- While

**Example:** Since I was tired, I decided to go to bed.

When the dependent (subordinate) clause follows the independent clause, don’t use a comma before or after the subordinating conjunction (connecting word).

- after
- although
- even though
- though
- as
- as if
- as though
- as long as
- because
- before
- if
- so/ so that
- since
- unless
- until
- whatever
- when
- whenever
- where
- wherever
- whether
- while

**Example:** I decided to go to bed since I was tired.

Dependent clauses are dependent. They can’t stand alone as complete sentences because they begin with a subordinating conjunction.

Independent clauses are independent. They can stand alone as complete sentences.

Subordinate clauses are dependent. They can’t stand alone as complete sentences because they begin with a subordinating conjunction.

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