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Definitions of Independent and Dependent Clauses

Independent Clause (IC)

An independent clause is a group of words that contains a subject (underlined once) and verb (underlined twice) and expresses a complete thought. An independent clause is a sentence.

Example: Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz. (IC)

Dependent Clause (DC)

A dependent clause is a group of words that contains a subject (underlined once) and verb (underlined twice) but does not express a complete thought. A dependent clause cannot be a sentence. Often a dependent clause is marked by a **dependent marker word**, also known as subordinating conjunctions or relative pronouns.

Example: When Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz . . . (DC)
(What happened when he studied? The thought is incomplete.)

Dependent Marker Word (DM)

A dependent marker word is a word added to the beginning of an independent clause that turns it into a dependent clause.

Example: When Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz, it was very noisy.
(DM)

Some common dependent markers are: *after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, if, in order to, since, though, unless, until, whatever, when, whenever, whether, while, that, which, what, who, whoever, whom, whomever and whose.*

Identifying Independent and Dependent Clauses Exercise

Directions: Identify both types of clauses within the sentences below. *Underline the subject once and the verb twice* in both the dependent and independent clauses, *circle the dependent clauses*, and *place parentheses around the dependent marker word*.

Example: (When) I lifted the lid, the smell of fresh coffee beans filled the room.

- __ 1. Our organization will provide food and shelter to whoever needs help.
- __ 2. We looked for a quiet spot where we could study.
- __ 3. When the moon is full, magical things often happen.
- __ 4. I knew that you would enjoy the concert.
- __ 5. You should have stopped as soon as the light turned red.
- __ 6. Is that what you truly believe?
- __ 7. Before we left, we ate lunch.
- __ 8. Those who arrive late will not be seated until the first intermission.
- __ 9. Last year the only game that I saw ended in a tie.
- __ 10. The flight was diverted to Denver because our airport was fogged in.

Answers at the End

Connecting Dependent and Independent Clauses

There are two types of words that can be used as connectors at the beginning of an independent clause: coordinating conjunctions and independent marker words.

1. Coordinating Conjunction (CC)

The seven coordinating conjunctions used as connecting words at the beginning of an independent clause are *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so* (memorize as FANBOYS). When the second independent clause in a sentence begins with a coordinating conjunction, a comma is needed before the coordinating conjunction:

Example: Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz, but it was hard to concentrate because of the noise. (CC)

2. Independent Marker Word (IM)

An independent marker word is a connecting word used at the beginning of an independent clause. These words can always begin a sentence that can stand alone. When the second independent clause in a sentence has an independent marker word, a semicolon is needed before the independent marker word.

Example: Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz; however, it was hard to concentrate because of the noise. (IM)

Some common independent markers are: *also, consequently, furthermore, however, moreover, nevertheless, and therefore.*

Proper Punctuation Methods for Connecting Independent and Dependent Clauses

This table gives some examples of ways to combine independent and dependent clauses and shows how to punctuate them properly.

IC- Independent Clause, DC-Dependent-Clause, IM- Independent Marker

IC. IC.	I went to the store. I didn't buy any bread.
IC; IC.	I went to the store; I didn't buy any bread.

IC, CC IC.	I went to the store, but I didn't buy any bread.
IC; IM, IC.	I went to the store; however, I didn't buy any bread.
DC, IC.	When I went to the store, I didn't buy any bread.
IC DC.	I didn't buy any bread when I went to the store.

Some Common Errors to Avoid

Comma Splices

A comma splice is the use of a comma between two independent clauses. You can usually fix the error by changing the comma to a period and therefore making the two clauses into two separate sentences, by changing the comma to a semicolon, or by making one clause dependent by inserting a dependent marker word in front of it.

Incorrect: ~~I like this class, it is very interesting.~~

Correct: I like this class. It is very interesting.

(or) I like this class; it is very interesting.

(or) I like this class, and it is very interesting.

(or) I like this class because it is very interesting.

(or) Because it is very interesting, I like this class.

Fused Sentences

Fused sentences happen when there are two independent clauses not separated by any form of punctuation. This error is also known as a **run-on sentence**. The error can

sometimes be corrected by adding a period, semicolon, or colon to separate the two sentences.

Incorrect: ~~My professor is intelligent I've learned a lot from her.~~

Correct: My professor is intelligent. I've learned a lot from her.

(or) My professor is intelligent; I've learned a lot from her.

(or) My professor is intelligent, and I've learned a lot from her.

(or) My professor is intelligent; moreover, I've learned a lot from her.

Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments happen by treating a dependent clause or other incomplete thought as a complete sentence. You can usually fix this error by combining it with another sentence to make a complete thought or by removing the dependent marker word.

Incorrect: ~~Because I forgot the exam was today.~~

Correct: Because I forgot the exam was today, I didn't study.

(or) I forgot the exam was today.

Connecting and Correcting Independent and Dependent Clauses Exercise

Directions: Correct the following fused sentences and fragments by adding the proper punctuation and/or marker words or by rewriting the sentence completely. Feel free to utilize the Proper Punctuation Methods Table provided earlier in the packet.

Example: My mother is a teacher she is teaching overseas in Qatar.

Corrected: My mother is a teacher; currently, she is teaching overseas in Qatar.

1. The instructor recited the Latin names for the flowers Tim busily wrote them in his notebook.

2. On sunny days, students are usually distracted during class when it is particularly sunny they won't even show up to class.
3. Because I left my backpack at home.
4. Under the apple tree, a man slept soundly his hat covered his rugged face as he snored quietly.
5. When I am hungry.
6. Suffering from lack of sleep, Maria fought to keep her eyes open in class she had to hold her head up with her hand.
7. Fireflies over the lake on a dark night are a magnificent sight to behold they look like fairies dancing through the night.
8. Although the fortune teller told me.
9. There is a paint-your-own pottery shop just down the street from my house painting your own pottery can be a relaxing activity.
10. This is a fused sentence I promise you.

Noun, Adjective, and Adverb Clauses

Dependent clauses act as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs within the sentence. Noun clauses may serve as direct objects, objects of the preposition, or subjects within the complete sentence. Adjective clauses modify nouns or pronouns and answer the questions such as *who* and *which one*. Adverb clauses modify verbs and tell *when*, *why*, or *where*.

Examples:

I must admit DO [that you are right].

(Noun clause as direct objects)

The woman ADJ [who climbed Everest] wrote a book about her experience.

(Adjective clause describing woman)

He went home early ADV [because he was angry].

(Adverb clause modifying went)

Directions: Go back to Exercise 1 and label the dependent clauses as N, ADJ, or ADV.

Answers on first key.

Answer Key for Independent and Dependent Clauses

N 1. Our organization will provide food and shelter to [*whoever needs* help].

ADJ 2. We looked for a quiet spot [*where we could study*].

ADV 3. [*When the moon is* full], magical things often happen.

N 4. I knew [*that you would enjoy* the concert].

ADV 5. You should have stopped [*as soon as the light turned* red].

N 6. Is that [*what you truly believe*]?

ADV 7. [*Before we left*], we ate lunch.

ADJ 8. Those [*who arrive* late] will not be seated until the first intermission.

ADJ 9. Last year the only game [*that I saw*] ended in a tie.

ADV 10. The flight was diverted to Denver [*because our airport was* fogged in].

[] = Dependent Clauses

Single underline = Subject

Double underline = Verb

Italics = Subordinator

