

Independent & Subordinate Clauses

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

Definition: A clause that can stand alone as a single sentence. It follows the basic pattern of Subject + Verb.

Independent Clause		
The ice cream	melted	in the sun.
Subject	Verb	

SUBORDINATE CLAUSE

Definition: A clause that cannot stand alone; it must connect to an independent clause to form a sentence. It follows the pattern of Subordinating Conjunction + Subject (S) + Verb (V).

Subordinating Conjunctions (Sub.): after, although, as, as if, because, before, even though, if, in order that, rather than, since, so that, than, that, though, unless, until, when, where, whether, while

Independent Clause		Subordinate Clause	
The ice cream	melted in the sun	before	it ran down my hand.
S	V	Sub.	S V

- Note: As you can see, "before it ran down my hand" is not a sentence on its own even though it contains a subject and verb. It is a subordinate clause.
- Do not confuse subordinate clauses with phrases that begin with subordinate conjunctions. A clause has a subject and a verb. A phrase does not have a subject and verb together; it cannot stand alone as a sentence. Note the differences below:

Subordinate Clause: Because Jay loves swimming, I swim every day.
Sub. S V

Phrase: Because of my school debt, I have to work extra hours.
Sub. Prep. Phrase

WAYS TO PUNCTUATE CLAUSES:

Independent Clause (IC) + Independent Clause

- 1) IC. IC.
- 2) IC; IC.
- 3) IC, for/and/nor/or/but/yet/so IC.

Independent Clause (IC) + Subordinate Clause (SC)

- 1) IC SC.
- 2) SC, IC.
- 3) IC SC, for/and/nor/or/but/yet/so IC.