

Coordination and Subordination

LNC Writing Center Review

Independent Clauses

Identifying Independent Clauses

An independent clause is a sentence that has both a subject and a verb. The subject is underlined and the verb is circled.

- ✓ My computer (runs) very smoothly.
- ✓ Gardening (is) good for mental health.

It can be as simple as a sentence that is only a subject and verb.

- ✓ I (love). We (eat). Birds (sing).

Independent clauses can stand alone as full sentences.

Practice A1: Underline the subjects and circle the verbs.

1. The jet engine passed inspection.
2. She lifts weights and jogs daily.
3. He and I like cake.
4. He is trying to leave.
5. Please bring me some coffee.
6. The moon disappeared behind the clouds.
7. His outward features reflect the delightful character within.

Connecting Independent Clauses

To add one independent clause to another, use a comma and a coordinating conjunction: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*.

Yesterday was very busy. + Let's just sit around today.

↓

Yesterday was very busy, **so** let's just sit around today.

You can *only* connect independent clauses to one another using a comma and a coordinating conjunction. You can remember these conjunctions with the acronym FANBOYS: **F**or, **A**nd, **N**or, **B**ut, **O**r, **Y**et, **S**o.

- ✓ I (love) visiting amusement parks, **but** it (is) too hot to do that in the summer.

Practice A2: Insert a comma before the coordinating conjunctions.

1. You may have soup or you may have salad.
2. Brianna did not set the table nor did she do the dishes.
3. The woodpecker hopped across the branches and pecked at the tree bark.
4. Juan missed the first train so he waited for the next one.

Practice A3: Insert a coordinating conjunction that fits the sentence.

1. I wanted to remember that day at the beach forever, _____ I took lots of pictures.
2. I love to go birdwatching, _____ it's so humid during the summer.
3. My mother works at Best Buy, _____ my father works at Publix.
4. We could go to the movies, _____ we might want to just hang out at home.
5. Mohammed plays the violin very well, _____ the guitar is his favorite instrument.
6. Sharon improved her use of punctuation, _____ she worked on it all semester.

Error: Comma Splices

You cannot connect independent clauses with just a comma.

- ✗ Yesterday was very **busy**, **let's** just sit around today.
- ✗ I love visiting amusement **parks**, **it's** fun to go with friends.

Error: Fused Sentences/Run-ons

You also cannot connect independent clauses with nothing between them.

- ✗ Yesterday was very **busy let's** just sit around today.
- ✗ My computer runs **smoothly it's** brand new.

Separating Independent Clauses

You can separate independent clauses with a period or a semicolon.

- ✓ Yesterday was very busy. Let's just sit around today.
 - ✓ Yesterday was very busy; let's just sit around today.
 - ✓ Yesterday was very busy; **however**, I still have energy for work today.
- The word after the semicolon is not capitalized.
 - The transition word after the semicolon has a comma after it.
 - A transition word after a semicolon cannot be a FANBOYS:
 - ✗ Yesterday was very **busy**; **but** I still have energy today.

Practice A4: Correct the following fused sentences and comma splices.

Choose whichever methods of correction you think are best.

1. The weather today will be cool it will be rainy.
2. My cat loves to nap on warm appliances when he sleeps on top of the TV, his tail swipes the screen.
3. La'Mia studied comma splices and fused sentences until she thought her brain would burst, finally, she put away her notes, convinced she would remember the rules forever.
4. Uncle Josiah is a real hypochondriac when his stomach hurts, he is certain that he has a bleeding ulcer, and if he has a backache, he believes that he has cancer of the spine.

Dependent Clauses

Identifying Dependent Clauses

A dependent clause is a part of a sentence that cannot stand on its own.

- ✗ Looking through the window.

It does not have its own subject and verb like an independent clause does.

Dependent: Looking through the window

Independent: She looked through the window.

Some dependent clauses look like independent clauses because they have a subject and verb.

- ✗ When I go shopping.

But these are still dependent clauses because of the subordinating conjunction. Subordinating conjunctions, or “dependent markers,” are words or phrases used to introduce dependent clauses.

When I go shopping...

Because I have a car...

Although it can't be seen...

Whether or not your dog likes squeaky toys...

Before it starts raining...

Practice B1: Circle the subordinating conjunctions and double-underline the dependent clauses.

1. Travis sneezes when he walks out into sunlight.
2. I don't want to go on social media until I watch the new season because I'm afraid of seeing spoilers.
3. I hired Shaniqua, whose garden design is top-notch.
4. Now that I feel confident with pre-calculus, I'm ready to take a Calculus I course.
5. As Christmas grows near, the anticipation for seeing my family grows, too.
6. Making up his mind quickly, Garret took a sharp right turn onto Stardew Ave.

Error: Fragments

If a dependent clause is left on its own, it is called a fragment.

- ✗ Looking through the window. She saw a dark shape.
- ✗ Let's go home. Before it starts raining.

A dependent clause must be connected to an independent clause.

- ✓ Looking through the window, she saw a dark shape.
- ✓ Let's go home before it starts raining.
 - Commands have an assumed subject of “you.”

Starting an independent clause with a FANBOYS usually also counts as a fragment.

- ✗ And I had fun.
- ✗ So we didn't stay.

Practice B2: If the sentence includes a fragment, rewrite it to eliminate the error.

1. The haunting of the house on the craggy hill just outside of town.
2. Because they are hairy and frightening with large pointed fangs and shiny yellow eyes.
3. Within each group, a wide range of features to choose from. It was difficult to choose which one.
4. I will call the doctor's office during my lunch break.
5. The scene was filled with beauty. Such as the sunlight illuminating the leaves in greens, golds, and reds.

Connecting Dependent to Independent

Dependent clauses must be connected to independent clauses. The dependent clauses are double-underlined and the independent clauses are boxed.

- ✓ When I drink tea, I feel calm.
- ✓ The instructions are in the drawer where we keep the blue folders.

Notice that a dependent clause can be before, in the middle, or after an independent clause.

Before: Whether or not your dog likes toys, playing with your dog is important.

After: Playing with your dog is important whether or not your dog likes toys.

Middle: Playing with your dog, whether or not your dog likes toys, is important.

Practice B3: Box the independent clauses. Some sentences may have more than one.

1. After a long, rainy winter, the woman and her husband had become tired of their small apartment, so they decided to drive downtown in search of excitement.
2. The couple had been cruising slowly down a side street, looking for some local nightlife, when they heard music coming from a small bar on the corner.
3. They had just left their car when some stray cats started fighting in a side alley.
4. The bartender was wiping down the counter and softly whistling to himself.
5. A sad Billie Holiday tune had been playing softly from an old jukebox, but once the song was over, the room went silent.

Using Commas with Dependent Clauses

When you connect dependent clauses to independent clauses, the use of commas depends on where you place the dependent clause.

When the dependent clause comes *before* the independent clause, use a comma after the dependent clause.

Whether or not your dog likes toys, playing with your dog is important.

When the dependent clause comes *after* the independent clause, don't use a comma.

Playing with your dog is important whether or not your dog likes toys.

When the dependent clause is placed in the *middle* of the independent clause, use a pair of commas around the dependent clause.

Playing with your dog, whether or not your dog likes toys, is important.

Practice B4: Correct the comma errors. Some sentences may already be correct.

1. The sun radiating intense heat crept slowly across the sky.
2. Damian won't be able to play in the game because he injured his foot.
3. I appreciate your hard work. In this case however, you seem to have over-exerted yourself.
4. Having finished the test, he left the room.
5. I go out to eat dinner with my friends, at the end of each semester.
6. This worksheet which has many practice questions will help me to understand comma usage.
7. Now that we've painted the kitchen we might as well paint the living room.
8. The restaurant has an exciting atmosphere. The food on the other hand is rather bland.
9. My friend from college who majored in biotechnology is visiting to attend the school game with me.
10. Unless, you're looking for the very best kind of marble counters you can sometimes find the less expensive ones at discount stores.

Answer Key

Practice A1: Underline the subjects and circle the verbs.

1. The jet engine (passed) inspection.
2. She (lifts) weights and (jogs) daily.
 - In this case, two verbs are connected to one subject.
3. He and I (like) cake.
 - In this case, two subjects are connected to one verb.
4. He (is) trying to leave.
5. You Please (bring) me some coffee.
 - Commands are assumed to have the subject of “you.”
6. The moon (disappeared) behind the clouds.
7. His outward features (reflect) the delightful character within.
 - The noun or verb may be part of a longer phrase. In this case, the phrase includes a descriptive adjective: “outward.”

Practice A2: Insert a comma before the coordinating conjunctions.

1. You (may have) soup, or you (may have) salad.
 - Look for the new ‘set’ of subjects and verbs to determine whether you have a new independent clause.
2. Brianna (did not set) the table, nor (did) she do the dishes.
3. The woodpecker (hopped) across the branches and (pecked) at the tree bark.
 - In this case, the word “and” is not acting as a coordinating conjunction. Instead, it is connecting the two verbs “hopped” and “pecked.”
4. Juan (missed) the first train, so he (waited) for the next one.

Practice A3: Insert a coordinating conjunction that fits the sentence.

1. I wanted to remember that day at the beach forever, so I took lots of pictures.
2. I love to go birdwatching, but it's so humid during the summer.
3. My mother works at Best Buy, and/but/yet my father works at Publix.
4. We could go to the movies, or/but we might want to just hang out at home.
5. Mohammed plays the violin very well, yet/but the guitar is his favorite instrument.
6. Sharon improved her use of punctuation, for she worked on it all semester.

**Practice A4: Correct the following fused sentences and comma splices.
Choose whichever methods of correction you think are best.**

1. The weather today will be cool it will be rainy.
The weather today will be cool and rainy.
 - o If the subject and verb of both independent clauses are the same (the weather/it and will be), you can rewrite the sentence by eliminating the repetition.
2. My cat loves to nap on warm appliances when he sleeps on top of the TV, his tail swipes the screen.
My cat loves to nap on warm appliances. When he sleeps on top of the TV, his tail swipes the screen.
3. La'Mia studied comma splices and fused sentences until she thought her brain would burst, finally, she put away her notes, convinced she would remember the rules forever.
La'Mia studied comma splices and fused sentences until she thought her brain would burst; finally, she put away her notes, convinced she would remember the rules forever.
4. Uncle Josiah is a real hypochondriac when his stomach hurts, he is certain that he has a bleeding ulcer, and if he has a backache, he believes that he has cancer of the spine.
Uncle Josiah is a real hypochondriac. When his stomach hurts, he is certain that he has a bleeding ulcer, and if he has a backache, he believes that he has cancer of the spine.

Practice B1: Circle the subordinating conjunctions and double-underline the dependent clauses.

1. Travis sneezes when he walks out into sunlight.
2. I don't want to go on social media until I watch the new season because I'm afraid of seeing spoilers.

3. I hired Shaniqua, whose garden design is top-notch.
4. Now that I feel confident with pre-calculus, I'm ready to take a Calculus I course.
5. As Christmas grows near, the anticipation for seeing my family grows, too.
6. Making up his mind quickly, Garret took a sharp right turn onto Stardew Ave.
 - This sentence does not include a subordinating conjunction to begin the dependent clause. However, the dependent clause does not have a subject; therefore, if it were left on its own, it would be a fragment. This is another way to identify a dependent clause.

Practice B2: If the sentence includes a fragment, rewrite it to eliminate the error.

1. The haunting of the house on the craggy hill just outside of town.
The house on the craggy hill just outside of town is haunted.
2. Because they are hairy and frightening with large pointed fangs and shiny yellow eyes.
Because they are hairy and frightening with large pointed fangs and shiny yellow eyes, I hate spiders no matter how small they are.
3. Within each group, a wide range of features to choose from. It was difficult to choose which one.
Within each group, there was a wide range of features to choose from. It was difficult to choose one.
4. I will call the doctor's office during my lunch break. ✓
5. The scene was filled with beauty. Such as the sunlight illuminating the leaves in greens, golds, and reds.
The scene was filled with beauty, such as the sunlight illuminating the leaves in greens, golds, and reds.

Practice B3: Box the independent clauses. Some sentences may have more than one.

1. After a long winter, the woman and her husband had become tired of their small apartment, so they decided to drive downtown in search of excitement.
 - Remember, independent clauses can be connected to each other with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS).
2. The couple had been cruising slowly down a side street, looking for some local nightlife, when they heard music coming from a small bar on the corner.

