Coordination and Subordination
LNC Writing Center Review

Many grammar and punctuation rules, especially ones tested in the PERT, connect to the concept of independent and dependent clauses. Those include comma splices, fused sentences/run-ons, semicolons, fragments, and comma rules.

Independent Clauses

Identifying Independent Clauses
An independent clause is a sentence that has both a subject and a verb.

> My **computer** *[subject]* **runs** *[verb]* very smoothly.
> **Gardening** *[subject]* **is** *[verb]* 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.

Connecting Independent Clauses
To add one independent clause to another, you need to use a comma and a FANBOYS.

> 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 with a comma and a FANBOYS (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So).

> I *[subject]* love *[verb]* visiting amusement parks**, but** it *[subject]* is *[verb]* too hot to do that in the summer.

Comma Splices
You cannot connect independent clauses with just a comma.

> Yesterday was very <u>busy, let's</u> just sit around today.
> I love visiting amusement <u>parks, it's</u> fun to go with friends.

Fused Sentences/Run-ons
You also cannot leave them with no connection.
Yesterday was very <u>busy let's</u> just sit around today.
My computer runs <u>smoothly it's</u> brand new.

Separating Independent Clauses
You can separate independent clauses with a period or a semicolon.
Yesterday was very busy**. L**et's just sit around today.
Yesterday was very busy**; l**et's just sit around today.
Yesterday was very busy**; however,** I still have energy for work today.

- Notice that the word after the semicolon is not capitalized.
- Notice that a connecting word after the semicolon has a comma after it.
  - A connecting word after a semicolon cannot be a FANBOYS.
    Yesterday was very <u>busy; but</u> I still have energy today.

Dependent Clauses

Identifying Dependent Clauses
A dependent clause is a part of a sentence that cannot stand on its own.
Looking into the window.

It does not have its own subject and verb like an independent clause does.
Dependent: Looking into the window
Independent: **She** [subject] **looked** [verb] into the window.

Some dependent clauses look like independent clauses because they have a subject and verb.
When I [subject] go [verb] shopping.
But these are still dependent clauses because of the subordinating conjunction.
Subordinating conjunctions are words 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…

Fragments

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

> Looking into 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 into the window, she *[subject]* saw *[verb]* a dark shape.
> Let's *[subject]* go *[verb]* home before it starts raining.

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

> And I had fun.
> So we didn't stay.

Connecting Dependent to Independent

Dependent clauses must be connected to independent clauses.

> Whether or not your dog likes toys, playing with your dog is important.
> The instructions are in the drawer where we keep the blue folders.

Notice that a dependent clause can be before or after an independent clause.

> Before: When I drink tea, I feel calm.
> After: I feel calm when I drink tea.

- If the dependent comes before, use a comma after the dependent.
- If the dependent comes after, don't use a comma.

Note: There are additional rules for using commas as you connect dependent to independent clauses, but those will not be tested on the PERT. Let a tutor know if you would like to learn those as well.