**Independent and Dependent Clauses**

**Review:** A clause is a group of words that has a subject and a verb.

The difference between an independent and a dependent clause is the type of word it

starts with.

* A dependent clause starts with a subordinator word such as “when,” “if” or “which.”

**Examples**: When Ronnie gets here,

If Denise comes to class late,

…which I bought last weekend

* An independent clause can stand alone as a separate sentence and does not start with a

Subordinate conjuction.

**Examples**: Let’s start the music.

I’ll tell her the assignment.

The battery is defective.

* Every sentence must have at least one independent clause.
* A dependent clause is combined with an independent clause to make a longer sentence.

**Examples**: When Ronnie gets here, let’s start the music.

If Denise comes to class late, I’ll tell her the assignment.

The battery which I bought last weekend is defective.

* Sentences with two clauses are called complex sentences. They have both an independent and a dependent clause.
* Sometimes two independent clauses are put together to make a longer sentence.

This is done with a comma and a FANBOYS conjunction. These examples are called compound sentences.

**Examples**: Dogs bark, and cats meow.

The weather is beautiful today, so I’ll take a walk.

* A sentence can be both compound and complex.

Example: When cats meow, dogs bark, and birds chirp.

**More about Subordinators and Dependent Clauses**

Subordinators such as “if,” “when,” “since,” “because,” &“although,” start **adverb dependent** clauses. (There are others) Think: **WASABI**

**Examples:** Since the cat is meowing, the dog is barking.

I'll take a walk because the weather is beautiful.

I smashed my car into an oak tree after I went to the store.

**Exercise: In the following sentences underline each adverb dependent clause.**

1. Because I partied all weekend, I never found time to do my homework.

2. I hate to drink coffee because it always upsets my stomach.

3. When you win the lottery, you can buy me dinner.

4. Although I don’t remember his name, I’m sure that man is a famous actor.

5. As I was walking down Broadway, a police car jumped the curb and ran over my cat.

6. After I graduate from varsity, I hope to work as a nurse at Lovelace Hospital.

7. You will never be a good student if you do not study.

8. The train was racing through the city as the evening sun went down.

9. This assignment is easy if you have taken a grammar course.

Subordinators such as “who,” “ whose” “which,” “that,” “ when” and “whom” start **adjective dependent clauses**.

Think: [**www.t/adj**](http://www.t/adj)

**Examples**: My cat, **who** is soft and sweet, hates dogs.

The shop **that** is on the corner has been robbed five times.

The weather, **which** is beautiful, makes me want to take a walk.

Do you know the girl **who** started in Grade 9 last week?

Can I have the pencil **that** I gave you this morning?

A notebook is a computer **which** can be carried around.

I won't eat in a restaurant **whose** cooks smoke.

I want to live in a place **where** there is lots to do.

Yesterday was a day **when** everything went wrong!

**Exercise: In the following sentences underline each adjective dependent clause.**

1. John Smith, who was an early English explorer, is most famous for his love for

the Native American girl Pocahontas.

2. Boland College, which is the only community college in town, is now offering courses in computer science.

3. A mule, which is the cross between a horse and a donkey, is known for being stubborn.

4. Money that is gained dishonestly spends just like money that is earned honestly.

(2 dependent clauses)

5. I like to drink coffee at Duffy’s, which is my favourite hangout.

6. The man in the blue shirt, whom I first met in Canada at a conference, is the

speaker tonight.

7. Money, which is often called the root of all evil, is good to have.

8. The high school that you attended must have had a wonderful English programme.

9. The woman who has the orange hair is my dear mother.

* Sometimes adjective dependent clauses do not start with a subordinator.

Sentence #8 above could read

The high school you attended must have had a wonderful English programme.

In sentence #9, the dependent clause could be changed to a prepositional phrase:

The woman with the orange hair is my dear mother.

Then the sentence has only one clause, an independent clause.

Remember: a dependent clause is not considered a complete thought and cannot be a sentence by itself. A dependent clause is a sentence fragment if it is not connected to an independent clause.

**Tips to make life easier**

* Do not use ‘who’ when referring to animals UNLESS you know the animal’s name.
* Punctuating relative clauses can be tricky, thus for each sentence, first decide if the relative clause is essential or nonessential and then use commas accordingly. Essential clauses do not require commas. A relative clause is essential when you need the information it provides.

**Look at this example**:

The children who skateboard in the street are especially noisy in the early evening.

‘Children’ is nonspecific. To know which ones we are talking about, we must have the information in the relative clause. Thus, the relative clause is essential and requires no commas.

If, however, we eliminate children and choose more specific nouns instead,

the relative clause becomes nonessential and does require commas to separate

it from the rest of the sentence.

Matthew and his sister Loretta, who skateboard in the street, are especially noisy

in the early evening.