Understanding Complex Sentences

As you advance in your English writing skills, you will encounter complex sentences. A complex sentence is a sentence that has one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. The dependent clause(s) in a complex sentence cannot stand alone as a sentence because they do not express a complete thought.

To create a complex sentence, you need to use a subordinating conjunction to connect the dependent clause to the independent clause. The subordinating conjunctions include words such as because, although, since, while, and if.

Here are some examples of complex sentences:

* **Because** I was tired, I went to bed early.
* **Although** I studied hard, I did not pass the test.
* **Since** it was raining, we decided to stay indoors.

In each of the above examples, the dependent clause is italicized, and the subordinating conjunction is bolded.

Complex sentences are useful when you want to provide more information to explain or modify your sentence’s main point. They can help you to express your ideas more clearly and precisely.

It is important to note that complex sentences are different from compound sentences. Compound sentences are sentences that have two or more independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction such as and, but, or, so.

Here is an example of a compound sentence:

* I went to the store, and I bought some milk.

In this example, there are two independent clauses joined by the coordinating conjunction “and.”

## Components of Complex Sentences

### **Independent Clauses**

An independent clause is a complete sentence that can stand alone. It contains a subject, verb, and expresses a complete thought. In a complex sentence, an independent clause is joined with one or more dependent clauses.

Here are some examples of independent clauses:

* She went to the store.
* I am going to the beach.
* They are playing soccer.

### **Dependent Clauses**

A dependent clause, also known as a subordinate clause, cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. It contains a subject and a verb, but it does not express a complete thought. Dependent clauses are used to provide additional information to the independent clause in a complex sentence.

Here are some examples of dependent clauses:

* When she went to the store
* Although I am tired
* Because they are playing soccer

In a complex sentence, the dependent clause is joined to the independent clause with a conjunction. Common conjunctions used to join dependent clauses include “although,” “because,” “since,” and “when.”

### **Examples**

Here are some examples of complex sentences with independent and dependent clauses:

* Although she was tired, she went to the gym.
* When the movie ended, we went to get ice cream.
* Since it was raining, we decided to stay indoors.

In each of these examples, the dependent clause provides additional information to the independent clause. The use of complex sentences can make your writing more interesting and varied. However, it is important to use them correctly to avoid confusing your readers.

Remember to use a comma before the conjunction when joining an independent and dependent clause. Also, be sure to use the correct conjunction to show the relationship between the clauses.

## Forming Complex Sentences

When you want to add more detail or explanation to your sentence’s main point, you can use complex sentences. These sentences contain one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. The dependent clause provides additional information, and it cannot stand alone as a sentence. Here’s how to form complex sentences.

### **Using Subordinating Conjunctions**

One way to form a complex sentence is by using subordinating conjunctions. These words connect the dependent clause to the independent clause, and they show the relationship between the two clauses. Here are some common subordinating conjunctions:

| **Subordinating Conjunctions** | **Example** |
| --- | --- |
| After | After I finish my homework, I will watch TV. |
| Although | Although it was raining, we went for a walk. |
| Because | Because I studied hard, I passed the exam. |
| If | If you come to the party, I will be happy. |
| Since | Since I started exercising, I feel better. |
| When | When I grow up, I want to be a doctor. |
| While | While I was cooking, I listened to music. |

### **Using Relative Pronouns**

Another way to form a complex sentence is by using relative pronouns. These words introduce the dependent clause, and they refer back to a noun or pronoun in the independent clause. Here are some common relative pronouns:

| **Relative Pronouns** | **Example** |
| --- | --- |
| Who | The woman who lives next door is very friendly. |
| Whom | The boy whom I met at the party is my new friend. |
| Whose | The dog whose tail is wagging is very happy. |
| Which | The book which I borrowed from the library is interesting. |
| That | The car that I bought last year is very reliable. |

Remember that the dependent clause cannot stand alone as a sentence. It needs the independent clause to make sense. Here are some examples of complex sentences using subordinating conjunctions and relative pronouns:

* Although it was late, she continued to work on her project.
* The man who won the race received a medal.
* Because the weather was bad, they decided to stay home.
* The book which I read last night was very suspenseful.

By using subordinating conjunctions and relative pronouns, you can create complex sentences that provide more detail and explanation to your writing.

## Punctuation in Complex Sentences

When it comes to complex sentences, punctuation is crucial to ensure clarity and avoid confusion. In a complex sentence, there are two or more clauses, and the way they are punctuated can significantly affect the meaning of the sentence.

The most common punctuation mark used in complex sentences is the comma. However, the use of commas depends on the type and position of the clauses. Here are some rules to keep in mind:

* Use a comma to separate two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so). For example: You can come to the party, but you have to bring a gift.
* Use a comma after a dependent clause that comes before an independent clause. For example: If you study hard, you will pass the exam.
* Do not use a comma after an independent clause that comes before a dependent clause. For example: I will go to the gym if I have time.
* Use commas to set off non-essential clauses or phrases. For example: The book, which I read last week, was excellent.
* Do not use a comma to separate essential clauses or phrases. For example: The man who stole my wallet was caught by the police.

It’s important to note that the use of commas in complex sentences can vary depending on the writer’s style and preference. However, it’s essential to be consistent and avoid [ambiguity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambiguity).

In addition to commas, other punctuation marks can also be used in complex sentences. Here are some examples:

* Semicolon: Use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses that are not joined by a coordinating conjunction. For example: She is a great singer; her voice is amazing.
* Colon: Use a colon to introduce a list or an explanation. For example: There are three things you need to do: study, practice, and believe in yourself.
* Dash: Use a dash to indicate a sudden change in thought or to emphasize a point. For example: I love pizza – who doesn’t?

In conclusion, punctuation plays a crucial role in complex sentences. By following the rules and guidelines, you can ensure that your writing is clear, concise, and easy to understand. Remember to use punctuation marks appropriately and consistently to avoid confusion.

## Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

When it comes to complex sentences, there are a few common mistakes that writers tend to make. Here are some tips on how to avoid these mistakes and improve your writing:

### **Run-On Sentences**

One of the most common mistakes in complex sentences is creating run-on sentences. A run-on sentence is a sentence that contains two or more independent clauses that are not properly separated. To avoid run-on sentences, you can use one of the following methods:

* Use a period to separate the two independent clauses into two separate sentences.
* Use a semicolon to separate the two independent clauses.
* Use a coordinating conjunction (and, or, but, so, yet, for, nor) to join the two independent clauses.

Example: You can avoid run-on sentences by using proper punctuation; for example, a period, semicolon, or coordinating conjunction.

### **Sentence Fragments**

Another common mistake in complex sentences is creating sentence fragments. A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence that is missing a subject, verb, or both. To avoid sentence fragments, make sure that each sentence has a subject and a verb.

Example: Avoid sentence fragments by making sure that each sentence has a subject and a verb.

### **Dangling Modifiers**

A dangling modifier is a word or phrase that modifies a word that is not in the sentence. This mistake can make your writing confusing and difficult to understand. To avoid dangling modifiers, make sure that the modifier is placed next to the word it is modifying.

Example: To avoid dangling modifiers, make sure that the modifier is placed next to the word it is modifying.

### **Misplaced Modifiers**

A misplaced modifier is a word or phrase that is placed in the wrong part of the sentence, making the sentence unclear or confusing. To avoid misplaced modifiers, make sure that the modifier is placed next to the word it is modifying.

Example: To avoid misplaced modifiers, make sure that the modifier is placed next to the word it is modifying.

By avoiding these common mistakes, you can create complex sentences that are clear, concise, and easy to understand.

Conclusion

Congratulations! You now have a good understanding of complex sentences. You know that they contain one independent clause and at least one dependent clause, and that they can be used to add detail and complexity to your writing.

You also know that subordinating conjunctions like “because,” “since,” and “until” are often used to connect clauses in complex sentences. Remember to use these conjunctions correctly and to avoid common errors like comma splices and run-on sentences.

To help you remember the key points of complex sentences, here is a quick summary:

* Complex sentences contain one independent clause and at least one dependent clause.
* Use subordinating conjunctions like “because,” “since,” and “until” to connect clauses.
* Be careful to avoid common errors like comma splices and run-on sentences.

Now that you have a solid understanding of complex sentences, you can start using them in your own writing. Remember to practice and experiment with different sentence structures to find what works best for you.

Good luck!

