



Did you know that in Berlin you are never further than 500 meters from the nearest bus stop or station?

Note: The following description of dependent clauses builds off of the linked discussion of [main clauses](#). That page addresses the such fundamental elements of word order as [the predicate](#), [subject](#), [direct and indirect objects](#), [the "mid-field,"](#) [negations](#), and ["non-elements."](#) This particular page deals only with the ways in which dependent clauses differ from main (or "independent") ones.

Again, people who would prefer to follow a more mechanical - but ultimately less complete - set of rules for word order in general would be better served by linking to these [prescriptive instructions for German word order](#). Both sites overlap considerably.

Dependent Clauses:

Our discussion of word order has been equating the German sentence with [main, or independent, clauses](#), but we can also use our model to describe dependent, or subordinate, clauses.

These units of grammatical organization consist of a subject and predicate, but they are dependent on a main clause. They fall into two categories, each defined by the element that introduces them.

I. [Relative clauses](#) begin with a relative pronoun.

II. [Dependent \(subordinate\) clauses](#) begin with a subordinating conjunction (or equivalent). There are a great many such conjunctions, some of the more common ones being:

als (<i>when</i>)	auch wenn (<i>even if</i>)	bevor (<i>before</i>)	bis (<i>until</i>)
damit (<i>so that</i>)	dass (<i>that</i>)	ehe (<i>before</i>)	nachdem (<i>after</i>)
ob (<i>whether</i>)	obwohl (<i>although</i>)	seitdem (<i>since</i>)	während (<i>while</i>)
weil (<i>because</i>)	wenn (<i>if, when</i>)		

A list of subordinating conjunctions also needs to include all of the interrogative words and phrases when they are used to state [indirect questions](#).

Ich weiß nicht, wann der Zug abfährt. *I don't know when the train leaves.*

Es ist nicht klar, wem das Buch gehört. *It isn't clear to whom the book belongs.*

When a subordinating conjunction occupies the first position, a dependent clause results. Keep in mind that, as the name implies, such a clause is not a whole sentence; an independent, or main clause must also be present. The primary feature of a dependent clause is that the finite verb is no longer in the second position, but moves to the end, following even the verb complement (if there is one). If that complement is a separable prefix, the two elements are written as one word. I.e. "er schläft ein" [*he falls asleep*] becomes "weil er einschläft" [*because he falls asleep*].

Some other examples:

...dass er sein Kind zur Schule fährt ...*that he drives his child to school*
...bevor du nach Hause kommst ...*before you come home*
...nachdem ich so viel zugenommen habe ...*after I gained so much weight*
...während das Semester in Deutschland beginnt ...*while the semester is starting in Germany*
...ob wir ihm alles sagen sollen ...*if we should tell him everything*
...obwohl du ihn erst heute kennen gelernt hast ...*although you never met him until today*

Sehr geehrte Besucher!

Wir möchten, dass Sie sich bei uns wohl fühlen. Deswegen haben wir einige Regeln aufgestellt, die für den gesamten Bereich des Schloss-Strassen-Centers gelten und deren Einhaltung wir streng verfolgen.

Dear Visitors, we would like you to feel comfortable with us. Therefore we have put some rules in place that apply to the entirety of the Schloss Straße (shopping) Center and to which we strictly adhere.

In English, in order to state a desire for someone else to do something, we make the other person the object of the verb "to want" (or some equivalent) and attach an [infinitive construction](#): "I want you to clean up your room." German, in contrast, requires that the other person be the subject of a dependent clause that begins with "dass" and is the object of "wollen":



We want you to live safely. Your police.

Ich will, dass du dein Zimmer aufräumst.
I want you to clean up your room.

Sie möchte, dass er nach Hause anruft.
She would like him to call home.

Wollen Sie, dass ich Ihnen helfe?
Do you want me to help you?

Wir wollen, dass sie kocht.
We want her to cook.

Sie will, dass ich die ganze Arbeit mache.
She wants me to do all the work.

A colloquial exception: in telling someone strongly not to do something, Germans will sometimes put that into a "dass"-clause that stands alone:

Familiientag! Dass Sie mir bloß da keinen Termin reinschreiben!

A family day! Just don't you dare write anything there in my appointments calendar!

A note on word order: a dependent clause can follow, precede, or be inserted into the main clause. When it precedes, it normally occupies the first position, necessitating an inverted order in the independent clause (i.e. with the subject located in the third position).

Following:

Es ist schön, dass er sein Kind zur Schule fährt
It's nice that he drives his child to school

Mach deine Arbeit fertig, bevor du nach Hause kommst.
Finish your work before you come home

Preceding:

Nachdem ich so viel zugenommen habe, muss ich vernünftiger essen.
After I've gained so much weight, I'll have to eat more reasonably.

Auch wenn ich es wollte, könnte ich die Rechnung nicht bezahlen.
Even if I wanted to, I couldn't pay the bill.

Während das Semester in Deutschland beginnt, liegt er noch am Strand.
While the semester is starting in Germany, he's still lying on the beach

Obwohl du ihn erst heute kennen gelernt hast, scheinst du alles über ihn zu wissen.
Although you never met him until today, you seem to know all about him.

Within:

Die Idee, dass ich plötzlich für alles verantwortlich sein sollte, war mir neu.
The idea that I was suddenly supposed to be responsible for everything was new to me.



After Ralf has decided to assemble his music with the test-winner AOL ... he now just has to choose between Steffi and Julia.

As always, German ears prefer pronouns to precede nouns whenever they are next to each other. If beginning a sentence with a subordinate clause (or anything else) produces this juxtaposition, the order is affected:

Die Frau ist ihm zweimal begegnet, seitdem er in die Stadt gezogen ist.
 Seitdem er in die Stadt gezogen ist, ist ihm die Frau zweimal begegnet.
Since he moved to the city, he has encountered the woman twice.

Dependent clauses, including relative clauses, can serve as the subject or object of a sentence:

Dass wir ihm alles sagen sollen, ist nicht so klar.
That we should tell him everything is not so clear.

Ich weiß nicht, was du damit sagen willst.

I don't know what you mean by that.



Whoever has a grasp on his finances is simply more relaxed.

A variation on a dependent clause beginning with "wenn": In both English and German, it is possible to produce the sense of a "wenn"-clause in the [subjunctive voice](#) by omitting the "wenn" and leaving the first position empty (with the finite verb in the second):

Wenn ich das gewusst hätte, dann hätte ich dagegen protestiert.
Hätte ich das gewusst, dann hätte ich dagegen protestiert.
Had I known that, I would have protested against it.

Wenn ich du wäre, würde ich das nicht tun.
Wäre ich du, würde ich das nicht tun.
Were I you, I wouldn't do that.

In German, the same procedure applies, even when the clause is not in the subjunctive:

Wenn das oft vorkommt, kann es bedenklich sein.
If that happens frequently, it can be ominous.
Kommt das oft vor, kann es bedenklich sein.

Double-infinitives in the [perfect tenses](#):

In the case of main (independent) clauses, when [modal auxiliaries](#) and verbs like *sehen*, *hören*, *helfen*, and [lassen](#) the [perfect tenses](#), they form double-infinitives, which go to the final position of the clause:

Ich habe nichts **sehen können**. *I couldn't see anything.*
Wir hätten das nicht **sagen sollen**. *We shouldn't have said that.*
Der Prinz hat Rapunzel ein Lied **singen hören**. *The prince heard Rapunzel singing a song.*
Er hat ein neues Haus **bauen lassen**. *He had a new house built.*

In a dependent clause, these double-infinitives remain in the final position, and the conjugated auxiliary verb, *haben* or *sein*, slips into the second-the-last place:

Bist du sicher, dass sie das Buch hat lesen können ?	<i>Are you sure that she was able to read the book?</i>
Wir sind nach Hause gegangen, weil wir keine Karten haben kaufen können .	<i>We went home because we couldn't buy any tickets.</i>
Es ist schade, dass du ihn nie hast singen hören .	<i>It's too bad that you've never heard him sing.</i>
Er hatte kein Geld mehr, weil er ein neues Haus hatte bauen lassen .	<i>He didn't have any more money, because he had had a new house built.</i>
Sie erinnert sich nicht daran, dass ich ihr habe kochen helfen .	<i>She doesn't remember that I helped her cook.</i>