

Subordinating Conjunction

Definition of Subordinating Conjunction

Subordinating [conjunction](#) is a type of conjunction and a part of speech in grammar. It connects the main [clause](#) (independent clause) to the subordinate clause (dependent clause) by introducing the subordinate clause. It also describes a relationship between these two clauses. A subordinating conjunction appears at the beginning of a [sentence](#), or in the middle of two clauses, with or without using commas.

For instance, “**As** the ship moved toward the equator, the climate changed ... Sailors and porters hustled and halloed their way through the crowd **while** passengers vainly tried to keep their luggage together and in sight.” (*Master of the Game*, by Sidney Sheldon). In this sentence, Sheldon has used two subordinating conjunctions (in bold) that add further meaning, as well as cohesion to the text.

Types of Subordinating Conjunction

There are three types of subordinating conjunction, including:

Simple Subordinating Conjunction – Uses just one word, such as: although, as, if, since, until, unless, that, whereas, and while, etc. For instance, “You are never going to win unless you get little crazy.”

Complex Subordinating Conjunction – Consists of two or more words, such as: “such that, assuming that, so that, in order that, in so far as, granted that, and in case.” For example, “Always try to do what you cannot do, in order that you can learn the way to do it.”

Correlative Subordinating Conjunction – Uses a pair of words that relate two parts of a sentence, such as: As ... so, if ... then, or scarcely ... when. For instance, “If everyone demanded peace instead of another LCD screen, then there would be peace.”

Examples of Subordinating Conjunctions in Literature

Example #1: *Skeptical Essays* (by Bertrand Russell)

“Every man, **wherever** he goes, is encompassed by a cloud of comforting convictions, which move with him like flies on a summer day.”

In this sentence, Russell has connected the first three clauses by adding the simple subordinating conjunction “wherever.” The use of this conjunction has added to the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

Example #2: *The High Window* (by Raymond Chandler)

“I had a funny feeling **as** I saw the house disappear, **as though** I had written a poem and it was very good and I had lost it and would never remember it again.”

In these lines, Raymond Chandler has used a correlative subordinating conjunction, in which a pair of words (“as,” and “as though”) appears between two clauses, playing the role of connectors.

Example #3: *To the Lighthouse* (by Virginia Woolf)

“She went from the dining-room, holding James by the hand, **since** he would not go with the others ... Holding her black parasol very erect, and moving with an indescribable air of expectation, **as if** she were going to meet someone round the corner ... There he stood in the parlour of the poky little house where she had taken him, waiting for her, **while** she went upstairs a moment to see a woman. ...”

Here, Woolf has used both simple and complex subordinating conjunctions, illustrated in bold. Here, “as if” is a complex subordinating conjunction, and other bold words are simple subordinating conjunctions.

Example #4: *Ode to a Nightingale* (by John Keats)

“My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, **as though** of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains ...”

In the above lines, Keats has used a correlative subordinating conjunction, in which a pair of words, “as though” and “or,” relates the second and third lines, adding flow and rhythm to the poem.

Example #5: *The Old Man and the Sea* (by Earnest Hemingway)

“Just before it was dark, **as they** passed a great island of Sargasso weed that heaved and swung in the light sea **as though** the ocean were making love with something under a yellow blanket, his small line was taken by a dolphin.”

These lines present an instance of correlative subordinating conjunction. Hemingway has used two pairs of words to join three clauses in a single but lengthy sentence. These conjunctions have improved cohesion, and made sense of the lines.

Function

Subordinating conjunction is an essential part of speech in both written and verbal forms. It improves cohesion between different clauses, and enables a writer to construct long sentences without giving them an awkward feel. It also gives sense and adds rhythm to the text. Basically, it performs two functions in a sentence. First, subordinating conjunctions demonstrate the importance of the main clause. Second, they enable a shift or transition of ideas within a sentence. This transition always shows time, place, cause, effect, or relationship.