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SSC - 245

Subordination

Overview: Subordination creates unequal emphasis between ideas and emphasizes a major idea in one independent clause, while placing minor ideas in subordinate (sometimes called dependent) clauses. Dependent clauses are marked by **subordinating conjunctions**, or dependent words. Understanding subordination allows you to create complex sentences, adding sentence variety to your paragraphs. It also helps you avoid creating sentence fragments.

Subordination creates clauses that are subordinate (or less important) than the main independent clause because subordination emphasizes a major idea in one independent clause, while placing minor ideas in subordinate clauses. Choosing the clause to stress depends upon your intended meaning. The meaning of the sentence will often change based on the idea you subordinate. Notice how the meaning is different in each of the following examples:

As I continued to revise my paper, my points became clearer.

Although my points became clearer, I continued to revise my paper.

In the first sentence, the clarity of the author's points is emphasized. The second sentence, however, stresses the author's continued revision. To focus the sentence on revision, subordinate the clarity of the points and vice versa.

Note: A subordinate clause is separated from the main clause with a comma and would, if it stood alone, be a sentence fragment. For example, "Although my points became clearer" cannot stand alone as a sentence.

Subordinating Conjunctions

A subordinate, or dependent, clause containing the less important idea usually begins with a subordinating conjunction. Here are some common subordinating conjunctions:

<i>after</i>	<i>as long as</i>	<i>if</i>	<i>since</i>	<i>though</i>	<i>where</i>	<i>who</i>
<i>although</i>	<i>because</i>	<i>in order to</i>	<i>so</i>	<i>unless</i>	<i>whereas</i>	<i>whom</i>
<i>as</i>	<i>before</i>	<i>provided that</i>	<i>so that</i>	<i>until</i>	<i>which</i>	<i>whose</i>
<i>as if</i>	<i>even though</i>	<i>rather than</i>	<i>that</i>	<i>when</i>	<i>while</i>	

Examples of subordinate clauses connected to independent clauses:

Even though I am scared of flying, I am taking a plane to Spain.

Since I am graduating next month, I need to start looking for a job.

Although my sister's favorite subject is math, I prefer English.

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Jane's essay had many grammatical errors **because** she did not proofread it.

Paige decided to take the stray dog to the pound **where** his owners might be able to find him.

Mike rarely ate chocolate cake, **even though** it was his wife's favorite dessert.

Notice that though sentences beginning with a subordinate clause are followed by a comma, subordinate clauses in the middle of a sentence are not always preceded by a comma.

Practice: Now look at your own writing. Can you identify sentences that contain subordinate clauses? Do those clauses begin with subordinating conjunctions? Focus on one paragraph. Revise that paragraph so that two of your sentences consist of a dependent clause attached to an independent clause using a subordinating conjunction. Remember, however, to avoid structuring *all* of your sentences the same way. Try putting the subordinate clause at the beginning of some sentences and the end of others. Sentence structures should vary in order to avoid monotony and maintain the reader's interest.