

Subordinate Clauses: The Rules

A subordinate clause is a group of words that is **dependant** on the main clause because it **doesn't make sense on its own**. When main clauses and subordinate clauses are used together to form a sentence, it is called a **complex sentence**. The main clause has the verb and the subject in it.

Can you spot the **main clauses** and **subordinate clauses**?

The girls fed the ducks
before they walked around the lake.

The windmill sails turned quickly
because it is very windy today.



Subordinate Clauses: The Rules

Subordinate clauses can often start with a subordinating conjunction.

after

though

because

so that

before

until

while

provided

if

since

once

even though

whether

unless

although

when

as



Subordinating Conjunctions



A	WH	I	T	E	B	U	S
although after as	when whenever whatever whether whereas which	if in order that in case	though till that	even though even if	because before	until unless	since

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Subordinate Clauses: The Rules

Where in a sentence?

In the sentences we've looked at so far, the subordinate clauses have been **after** the main clause e.g.

The snow was thick on the ground
because it had snowed heavily.

The children laughed happily **as snowballs flew.**

Look at these sentences where the subordinate clause comes **before** the main clause...

When we use a subordinate clause at the beginning of a sentence, we must **add a comma** before the main clause.

Although she hated them,
Jenny ate the sprouts.

Before the campfire was lit,
the children were shivering in the cold.

Subordinate Clauses: The Tricky Bits

Subordinate clauses can also split the main clause. This is also called an **embedded clause** or (if the clause starts with a relative pronoun) a **relative clause**.
Look at these examples...

The Eiffel Tower, which is in Paris, is one of the busiest tourist attractions in the world.

Which is a **relative pronoun** so this subordinate clause can also be called a **relative clause**. It contains non-essential information so needs demarcating with commas.

Billy, gasping for air, tried to run from the charging bull.

This subordinate clause could also be called an **embedded clause**. Embedded means 'in the middle of' as it is in the middle of the main clause. It also contains non-essential information so needs demarcating with commas.

Relative Clauses: The Rules

Relative clauses are a type of subordinate clause, they give extra information related to a previously mentioned noun or pronoun within a sentence. A relative clause always starts with a relative pronoun.

Jess was going to a fancy dress party.
She was dressed as Batman.

The second sentence adds some extra information about the noun in the first sentence so we can turn it into a relative clause, like this...

Jess, who was dressed as Batman,
was going to a fancy dress party.

Who is a relative pronoun so this clause of extra information is called a relative clause. As this is extra, non-essential (non-restrictive) information we put the clause in commas.

Relative Clauses: The Rules

A relative clause almost always starts with a relative pronoun. Other relative pronouns are:

that

whom

whose

who

which



Relative Clauses: The Rules

Where in a sentence?

*in the middle of

They were all embedded* inside the main clause.
Therefore, we could also call them **embedded relative clauses**.
However, relative clauses don't always have to be embedded...

25 Maple Street, which has been up for sale for years, is apparently haunted.

A ghost, whose name is Mr. Stonegarden, roams the corridors.

The estate agent, who badly needs a sale, is frightened to show people around.

Look at this sentence. Where is the relative clause now? How do you know?

The children all did well in the spelling test,
which made their teacher smile.



Activity - Example sentences



Use A White Bus word bank. Chn choose one subordinating conjunction from each letter of A WHITE BUS and write a sentences. This will be useful for when you write your non chronological report.

e.g. in case – People had to carry gas masks *in case* a gas bomb was dropped by the German planes raging in the sky above. – encourage thoughtful not simple sentences.

Encourage chn to vary where the subordinate clause comes in their sentence, beginning, middle



Complete the sentences by using A White Bus to write a subordinate clause to go with the independent clause. Write in book and not onto sheet. Write 2 sentences for each changing where you place the subordinate clause. Remember punctuation

Ext - Write own sentences using subordinate conjunctions that they haven't already used.



Complete the sentences by using A White Bus to write a subordinate clause to go with the independent clause.

Activity - Example sentences

In case – People had to carry gas masks *in case* a gas bomb was dropped by the German planes raging in the sky above. – Write thoughtful not simple sentences.

Vary where the subordinate clause comes in their sentence, beginning, middle.

Quiz! Part 1

Put a tick in the correct column to show whether each group of highlighted words is a main clause or a subordinate clause.

	Main Clause	Subordinate Clause
If it starts to rain, you can wear your new wellington boots.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Neil gasped for breath before setting off again.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The koala, which is native to Australia, is a mammal.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Quiz! Part 2

Rewrite this sentence with the subordinate clause used as a fronted adverbial. Add a comma if necessary.

David didn't wear a coat
even though it was cold outside.

Even though it was cold outside,
David didn't wear a coat.

Quiz! Part 3

Underline the main clauses in the following sentences.

1. Running late for work, Mum frantically searched for her keys.
2. The setting sun, which looked beautiful, glistened in the sky.
3. The gerbil bit my finger before running back to its cage.

Quiz! Part 1

Tick **two** boxes to show which of the words in the sentence below are relative pronouns.



The plumber, **who** arrived late, had forgotten to bring his plunger, **which** meant he was unable to unblock our sink.



Quiz! Part 2

Read these two sentences. Rewrite them as one sentence, which contains an embedded relative clause.

Tawny owls eat mice and other small mammals.
Tawny owls are nocturnal birds.

Tawny owls, which are nocturnal birds, eat mice
and other small mammals.

or

Tawny owls, which eat mice and other small
mammals, are nocturnal birds.

Quiz! Part 3

Place **commas** in the following sentences in the correct positions to demarcate the **relative clauses**.

Leo, who is very sporty, enjoys PE lessons.

The pet ambulance rushed to the injured dog, which had trapped its paw.

Quiz! Part 3

Underline the main clauses in the following sentences.

1. Running late for work, Mum frantically searched for her keys.
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*Are you feeling
confident with main
and subordinate clauses?*

