

SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Subordinating conjunctions link dependent clauses to independent clauses, but, as their name suggests, they also signal that the information they contain is of less importance than or merely qualifies the main idea contained in the independent clause. Carefully minimizing specific information can yield great persuasive effect as can determining for the reader the type of relationship your clauses share.

Listed below are the types of different subordinating conjunctions.

Time: after, as, as soon as, before, now that, once, since, until, when, whenever, while

Cause and Effect or Reason: as,* because,* due to the fact that, since,* so that, in order that

Contrast or Concession: although, even though, even if, despite, in spite of, though, while, whereas

Place: where, wherever

Condition: as [far/long/soon/much] as, as if, as though, even if, if, only, unless, whether or not

Subordinating conjunctions can appear before or after your main independent clause. **If they appear at the beginning, they require a comma** at the end of their dependent clause. **If they appear at the end of the independent clause, though, they do not require a comma:**

- Because the defendant needed to feed her children, she neglected paying her property tax.
- Defendant neglected paying her property tax because she needed to feed her children.

Notice how the different syntax in the above examples creates different effects. In the first sentence, the reader learns of the mitigating circumstance before learning of the transgression. In the second example, though, the sentence ends with the mitigating circumstance and, in so doing, not only justifies and undermines the aforementioned transgression but also allows that mitigating circumstance to resonate in the reader's mind.

Again, notice how the placement of the subordinating conjunction either colors the main idea that follows or undermines or distracts from that main idea by coming after it.

- As soon as the plaintiff noticed his keys were missing, he called security and reported the potential theft.
- Even though the defendant could not prove residence, she did provide copies of all her necessary government identification forms.
- The police handcuffed the defendant despite his alibi and total cooperation with their investigation.
- A corporation must provide its employees with notice of termination unless an employee poses an immediate risk to coworkers.

Note: The more independent clauses, dependent clauses, and phrases you string together, the harder to follow your sentence becomes. Sometimes overloading a sentence so as to hide a piece of

information within the figurative haystack is a desirable effect. Otherwise, aim to balance rhetorical effect with clarity. A sentence structure can only be persuasive if, first, it is understandable.

* One can use “as” and “since” as synonyms for “because,” but the primary definitions of both relate to matters of time. Therefore, “because” is, in most cases, not only the more accurate term for discussing matters of cause and effect but also the more persuasive because it denotes a “cause” for the information that follows.