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Complex Sentences Made Easy

A complex sentence is a sentence in which at least two ideas are combined into a single sentence. What's so "complex" about that? For example, look at the following sentence:

- ➔ Because he forgot his wedding anniversary for the tenth straight year, Roger spent a week sleeping on the porch.

The two ideas expressed in the sentence are:

1. Roger forgot his wedding anniversary for the tenth straight year, *and*
2. Roger spent a week sleeping on the porch.

The two ideas could be expressed as two separate sentences, but they are more effectively expressed in a complex sentence. In a complex sentence the two ideas can be combined in a way that shows their cause-and-effect relationship. Notice how the word *because* explains to the reader the cause of Roger's problems. What follows the cause is the effect: Roger spent a week sleeping on the porch.

In the sentence about Roger, the word *because* is called a **subordinating conjunction**. That might sound like a puzzling term, but it is simply a type of word that will help you show the relationships between your ideas. Adverb clauses always begin with subordinating conjunctions.

Subordinating Conjunctions

Time	Cause and Effect	Contrast
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • after • before • as soon as • as • when • until • while 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • because • since • if • even though 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • although • while • though • whereas • unless

Here is another example of two simple sentences that might be combined into a single complex sentence with an adverb clause:

Simple Sentence	Combined Sentence
<p>The jury didn't believe the woman.</p> <p>The woman said that she killed her husband to prevent aliens from torturing him.</p>	<p>The jury didn't believe the woman when she said that she killed her husband to prevent aliens from torturing him.</p>

As a writer, you have a choice to open a sentence with an adverb clause or end your sentence with an adverb clause. Notice that when the adverb clause comes at the beginning, you use a comma to separate it from the rest of the sentence; but when the adverb clause comes at the end of the sentence, no comma is necessary.

Write Your Own Complex Sentences with Adjective Clauses

It is not hard to include complex sentences with adjective clauses in your own writing.

Step by Step: How to Write a Sentence with an Adjective Clause

Step 1: Write a simple sentence:

Isaac wrote his essay on a word processor.

Step 2: Look at the nouns in the sentence, and generate ideas for how to give more information about them. Begin each of your ideas with a relative pronoun.

Relative Pronouns: who, whom, whose, which, that, when, where

Isaac, who is known for his poor spelling
essay that had 450 spelling errors
word processor that did not have a spell-checker

Step 3: Revise and expand your sentence by adding the adjective clauses.

Isaac, who is known for his poor spelling, wrote an essay that had 450 spelling errors on a word processor that did not have a spell-checker.



Television Series Proposal

Follow the instructions in the step-by-step box to write your own complex sentences with adjective clauses. Write at least three proposals for new television dramas and/or comedies. Include information about the key characters and the setting of your shows.

Here is an example of a proposal for a television situation comedy:

Jason Jibson, who is an avid collector of tarantulas, manages a hair salon in New York where the female workers are constantly being frightened by huge, hairy spiders that have escaped from Jason's cages.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____
