Sentence Parts: Phrases and Clauses

Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions, or subordinators, link ideas together in a sentence. Here are some common subordinators grouped by how they connect ideas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subordinators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>After, as, as long as, as soon as, before, just as, now that, once, since, till, until, when, whenever, while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concession</td>
<td>Although, even though, if, though, whereas, while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>As long as, if, in case, inasmuch as, on the condition that, provided that, unless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause</td>
<td>As, as long as, because, inasmuch as, since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>In order that, lest, so, so that, that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>As, as if, as...as, just as, so... as, than</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manner</td>
<td>As, as if, as though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Where, wherever</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. A clause is a subject and verb. Subordinators are used at the beginning of subordinate clauses (which are also called dependent clauses) to connect to the independent part of the sentence. The subordinate clause always depends on the rest of the sentence; it cannot make sense alone. When the subordinate clause is at the beginning of a sentence, it will need a comma between the two clauses.

   If our team wins this game, will we qualify for the playoffs?

   Because I studied for only an hour, I did not pass the test.

2. If you place the subordinating conjunction between the two clauses, you do not need a comma.

   I went to the store because I needed to buy carrots.

   I didn’t call since I was only five minutes away.
Coordinating Conjunctions

1. **Coordinating conjunctions** are words that connect *two equal sentences, ideas, or objects*. Unlike subordinators, coordinating conjunctions do not make one part of the sentence depend on another part of the sentence. You can remember the seven coordinating conjunctions by using the acronym **FANBOYS**: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

2. When the coordinating conjunction connects two complete sentences, you must place a comma before the conjunction.

   \[ I \text{ went to the store, and I bought carrots. } \]

   \[ The carrots were tasty, so I decided to buy carrots again. \]

3. When presenting a list—whether of phrases or individual words—a comma and a coordinating conjunction are used before the last item in the list.

   I couldn’t decide whether to buy carrots, edamame, or a smoothie for lunch.

   \[ I \text{ went to the store, bought carrots and peas, and ate them on the way home. } \]

   I did not remember that I had already bought carrots, that I cooked them in a soup, and that I still had some left over.

4. When the coordinating conjunction connects only two actions, objects, or clauses, you do not use a comma.

   \[ I \text{ went to the store and bought carrots. } \]

   \[ I \text{ bought carrots and peas. } \]

   I did not remember *that I had already bought carrots and that I still had some left over.*

Relative Clauses

1. **Relative pronouns** are words that also introduce relative clauses (a type of subordinate clause). Unlike subordinators, which are followed by a subject and a verb, relative pronouns are followed directly by a verb. The most common are *that, which, and who.*

2. When a relative clause talks about extra, unnecessary information, you need to use a comma before and after the relative clause.

   The Olympic National Park, *which* is very beautiful, is in Washington State.
3. When a relative clause identifies or provides necessary information about a person, place, or thing, do not use commas.

   The woman who ran over our dog wants to apologize now.

**Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases**

1. **Prepositions** are words that show relationships between nouns.

   The pen is on the table.
   
   My car is in the garage.
   
   You should drive around the mountain.

2. A **prepositional phrase** is a group of words that begin with a preposition and end with the nearest noun after the preposition. No subjects can be in a prepositional phrase. If you place parentheses around a prepositional phrase, it can help isolate the most important parts of a sentence, the subject and verb.

   A big troll lives (under the bridge).
   
   (In my house) (on my table) (near the window) sits my plant.

3. When a prepositional phrase begins a sentence, place a comma after the end of the prepositional phrase.

   *On the table, you will find a pen.*

4. However, if a prepositional phrase is anywhere else in the sentence, you do not need a comma.

   You will find a pen *on the table.*