ENGLISH, LITERACY, AND COMMUNICATION

Independent and dependent clauses

Difficulty level: Intermediate

English, Literacy, and Communication

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Overview of the concept

This is how you join sentence parts correctly, so a text or an essay reads smoothly instead of breaking into fragments or running on. A sentence needs a part that can stand on its own, and the other parts have to be attached to it properly, or the writing falls apart. Getting this right makes your essays, emails, and applications read clearly, and it is the difference between writing that sounds polished and writing that sounds rushed.



Rule

An independent clause can stand alone as a complete sentence.

A dependent clause cannot stand alone, it leaves the reader waiting, so it must be joined to a main clause to make a complete sentence.

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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Classify: 'because it rained'

SOLUTION

Ask: can it stand alone as a sentence? 'Because it rained.' No, it leaves the reader waiting.

It depends on a main clause to complete it.

So it is a dependent clause.

EXAMPLE 2

Q Classify: 'we stayed home'

SOLUTION

Ask: can it stand alone as a sentence? 'We stayed home.' Yes, it is complete.

It does not depend on another clause.

So it is an independent clause.

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Practice questions

1 Classify: 'when she arrived'

A Dependent

B Independent

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2 Classify: 'the dog barked'

A Dependent

B Independent

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3 Classify: 'if you study'

A Dependent

B Independent

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4 Classify: 'I passed the test'

A Dependent

B Independent

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5 Classify: 'that he wrote'

A Dependent

B Independent

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6 Classify: 'they won the game'

A Dependent

B Independent

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7 Classify: 'although it was late'

A Dependent

B Independent

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8 Classify: 'she smiled'

A Dependent

B Independent

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9 Classify: 'while we waited'

A Dependent

B Independent

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10

Classify: 'the sun rose'

A Dependent

B Independent

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ANSWER KEY

1. Dependent

2. Independent

3. Dependent

4. Independent

5. Dependent

6. Independent

7. Dependent

8. Independent

9. Dependent

10. Independent

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