

## Independent & Dependent Clauses

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What is an independent clause?

An independent clause is a sentence that contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought.

Mary went to the store.

What is a dependent clause?

A dependent clause has a subject and a verb but does not express a complete thought and is therefore not a sentence. An independent clause becomes dependent when a “dependent word” is added. Some common dependent words are: after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, if, in order to, since, though, unless, until, whatever, when, whenever, whether, and while.

*When* Mary went to the store

*Even though* Mary went to the store

*After* Mary went to the store

These are incomplete thoughts because they leave us wanting more:

When Mary went to the store, ...what happened there?

Even though Mary went to the store, ...what?

After Mary went to the store, ...what happened?

To make these complete thoughts, add a new independent clause:

When Mary went to the store, she bought an apple.

Even though Mary went to the store, she forgot to buy milk.

After Mary went to the store, she cooked dinner.

As the examples show, a dependent clause is separated from an independent clause with a comma.

*Practice*

Add a comma in the correct place in the following sentences:

Before you feed the dog you should wash out his bowl.

Whenever my parents go out for dinner they prefer places that serve good Italian food.

Even though George often forgets his homework he still makes very high grades.

List several dependent words:

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Add a dependent word to the following sentence:

Harry walks down the street.

We went to the zoo.

Birds are the descendents of dinosaurs.

Having pets makes people happier.

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Are your clauses now dependent or independent? Why?

