

Coordination & Subordination Options

Coordination and subordination refer to the allowable ways combine sentences and clauses. Coordination is combining two or more [independent clauses](#), or complete sentences; coordination creates compound sentences. Subordination is combining two or more clauses, at least one of them independent but the others [dependent](#), or incomplete thoughts. Subordination creates complex sentences. You can avoid common punctuation errors (especially [run-ons and comma splices](#)) and develop more [sentence variety](#) in your writing by choosing from the options below.

Coordination, option one

Coordination combines two independent clauses; both clauses are complete thoughts. If you wanted to, you could separate independent clauses with a period. However, to achieve more variety in your writing, you want to be able to combine sentences. The most common way to combine complete sentences is to use coordinating conjunctions.

Coordinating conjunctions

You can use the acronym FANBOYS to remember the coordination conjunctions:

for	or
and	yet
nor	so
but	

Combine two independent clauses with a *comma-plus-coordinating conjunction* (the comma *precedes* the coordinating conjunction). Coordination using coordinating conjunctions looks like this:

[Independent clause] [comma-plus-coordinating conjunction] [independent clause].

The bus should arrive soon , but the road work may delay it.

Coordination, option two

Combine two independent clauses with a *semicolon*. It looks like this:

[Independent clause] [semicolon] [independent clause].

The bus should arrive soon; the road work may delay it.

Coordination, option three

A variation is to follow the semicolon with a transitional word (a conjunctive adverb) that signals the relationship between the two clauses. Because the transitional word is introducing the second clause, it is followed by a comma. This is what the pattern looks like:

[Independent clause] [semicolon] [transition word-plus-comma] [independent clause].

The bus should arrive soon; however, the road work may delay it.

Conjunctive adverbs

Some common conjunctive adverbs include these:

consequently,
furthermore,
however,
indeed,

in fact,
moreover,
nevertheless,
then,

therefore,
otherwise
similarly,
instead,

Subordination

Subordination combines at least one independent clause with one (or more) dependent clauses. The clause that begins with a subordinating conjunction is incomplete—it must be joined to an independent clause or it will remain a sentence fragment.

When you use subordination to combine ideas, you can choose which clause will be the independent clause and which will be the dependent clause. The dependent clause will be the one that *begins with* the subordinating conjunction.

Subordinating conjunctions

Some common subordinating conjunctions include these:

after
although
as (as if)

because
if
since
unless

until
when (whenever)
while

Subordination, option one

If the first clause is the independent clause, and the second is the dependent clause, no comma is needed between them. The pattern is very simple and looks like this:

[Independent clause]

[dependent clause].

The bus should arrive soon
The bus may be late

if the road work doesn't delay it.
because the road work may delay its arrival.

Subordination, option two

If the first clause is dependent, place a comma at the end of that clause. Then add the independent clause. The pattern looks like this:

[Dependent clause]

[comma]

[independent clause].

If the road work doesn't delay it,

the bus should arrive soon.

Although the bus should arrive soon,

the road work may delay it.

Note: Do *not* place commas after subordinating conjunctions themselves. Place the comma at the *end of the clause*.

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