

# 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"> <li>• after</li> <li>• before</li> <li>• as soon as</li> <li>• as</li> <li>• when</li> <li>• until</li> <li>• while</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• because</li> <li>• since</li> <li>• if</li> <li>• even though</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• although</li> <li>• while</li> <li>• though</li> <li>• whereas</li> <li>• unless</li> </ul>

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
The jury didn’t believe the woman.  torturing him.	The woman said that she killed her husband to prevent aliens from  The jury didn’t believe the woman when she said that she killed her husband to prevent aliens from torturing him.

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.

# Complex Sentences Made Easy *(cont.)*

**Directions:** Circle the subordinating conjunctions and underline any adverb clauses.

1. Although he was tired, mad, and hungry, the sophomore, a hard working young man, quietly read his textbook, a 5-inch thick tome on American history.
2. Randy loves to read; however, he cannot stand Hemingway.
3. Mr. Johnson's teenage son has a brand new car even though he does not have a job.
4. When he found out that the price of the buffet did not include a soft drink, Stan settled for a cup of gravy.
5. When Luke made homemade ice cream, he didn't realize that he had mistakenly added black olives instead of blueberries.
6. Since there are 85 billion different possibilities for the first four moves of a chess game, alternative moves are not hard to find.
7. If you add kiwifruit to gelatin, it will not gel.
8. When he began using his phone book to call random numbers, Joe's friends knew that he was desperate for a date to the dance.

**Sentence Combining:** Combine the following sentences into a single complex sentence with at least one adverb clause.

1. Pedro spent all night on it. He was unable to finish his project, a solar-powered toothbrush.

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2. Ron wants to find a cure for the common cold and for hiccups. He then wants to retire and live in Florida.

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3. The teacher announced that the test was cancelled. The class cheered.

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**Practice 1:** Look over the list of 40 topics on pages 65–67. On a separate piece of paper, write at least eight complex sentences with adverb clauses on one or multiple topics

**Practice 2:** At random, select a noun and a verb from the lists on page 63, and combine the words by using them in a complex sentence with an adverb clause. You may alter the noun or verb; however, you must use the noun as a noun and the verb as a verb. On a separate piece of paper, write eight simple sentences with eight different random combinations of nouns and verbs.

**Bonus:** Find an example of a sentence that uses an adverb clause, either in a work of fiction you are reading or in a newspaper or magazine article/ad. On a separate piece of paper, write down the sentence and the author and title of the source from which you got it. Underline the adverb clauses.

# Answer Key (cont.)

**Sentence Combining:** Answers may vary; possible answers listed below.

1. In her neon pink swimsuit, Susan swam towards the shore.
2. The books on the library bookshelf were out-of-date encyclopedias.
3. Bill kept his prize-winning photographs of mailboxes in a leather-bound photo album.

## Pages 26 and 27

Nouns	Appositives
1. men	old friends
2. Ron Smith	the world's most honest police officer
3. 1968	145 years later
4. song	an old Scottish waltz
5. speech	the shortest in history
6. cat	a large tabby
7. Joy	an avid photographer
8. Ron	a miler on our high school track team

**Sentence Combining:** Answers may vary; possible answers listed below.

1. Felix took his two most valuable possessions, his baseball cards and his pet slug, with him on his vacation.
2. Callie, an amateur ventriloquist, wants to teach her dummy how to speak French.
3. Joe sat quietly eating his favorite meal, a cottage cheese and Spam sandwich.

## Pages 30 and 31

1. Reading a magazine article on effective flossing techniques
2. laughing at the joke
3. Eating a banana, eating an ice-cream cone
4. Guzzling a half-gallon of past-date 2% milk in 60 seconds
5. repairing the chili pump at the corner convenience store
6. Using a separate car key for each of his ears
7. Spending at least four hours brainstorming
8. Removing a large glob of gum from his mouth
9. Taking copious notes on the differences between males and females

**Sentence Combining:** Answers may vary; possible answers listed below.

1. Hoping to find his missing sweat sock, Gary plunged his arm into the dirty-clothes hamper.

2. Linda, singing every Beatles song she knew, tried to entertain her guests from England.
3. Talking in a loud, raspy voice, the woman annoyed everyone by giving away the movie's ending.

## Page 34

1. PN, is
2. PN, is
3. X
4. PN, will be
5. X
6. PN, is
7. PN, are
8. PN, is

## Page 38

1. PA, is
2. PA, were
3. PA, is
4. PA, is
5. X
6. PA, are
7. PA, is
8. X

## Page 43

1. Although he was tired, mad, and hungry
2. None
3. even though he does not have a job
4. When he found out that the price for the buffet did not include a soft drink
5. When Luke made homemade ice cream
6. Since there are 85 billion different possibilities for the first four moves of a chess game
7. If you add kiwi fruit to gelatin
8. When he began using his phone book to call random numbers

**Sentence Combining:** Answers may vary; possible answers listed below.

1. Even though he spent all night working on it, Pedro was unable to finish his project, a solar-powered toothbrush.
2. After Ron finds a cure for the common cold and for hiccups, he wants to retire and live in Florida.
3. When the teacher announced that the test was cancelled, the class cheered.