

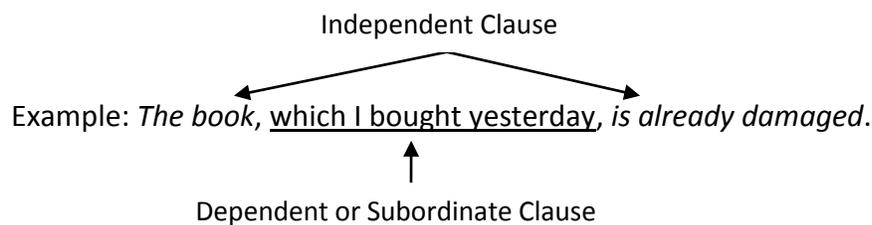
Dependent and Independent Clauses Or Subordinate Clauses

What are Independent, Dependent, and Subordinate Clauses?

An **independent clause** expresses a complete thought. If said to someone, it makes sense without needing any other information.

A **dependent clause** does not express a complete thought. It needs more information to make sense. If the listener asks an obvious question after hearing it, it is a dependent clause.

A **subordinate clause** is another name for a dependent clause. Usually, dependent clauses are added to independent clauses, but they are less important and thus *subordinate* (lower in importance) than the independent clause. In the example below, it is helpful to know when the book was purchased, but this is clearly less important than the other information in the sentence.



Commas and Dependent Clauses

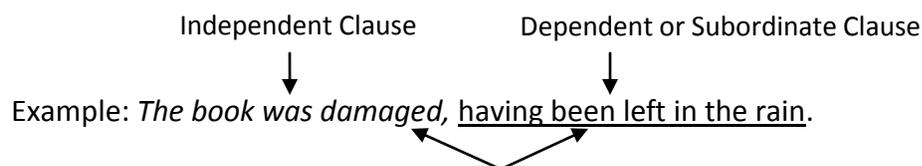
When a dependent clause is placed in the middle of an independent clause, as in the example above, you must put a comma before and after it. This helps the reader see which information is most important and which is *subordinate* (lower in importance). The same is true when the *dependent/subordinate clause* is placed at the end or beginning of the sentence.

Example: *The book is already damaged, which I bought yesterday.*

Example: *After I bought it yesterday, the book got damaged.*

When a dependent/subordinate clause is put at the beginning of a sentence, it is usually called an *introductory phrase* or *transition phrase*. It sets up the independent clause.

If you add a dependent clause to the end of a sentence, it should directly relate to the end of the independent clause. The example, “The book is already damaged, which I bought yesterday,” does not follow this rule and thus is awkward.



The dependent/subordinate clause explains how the subject (the book) was damaged (the end of the independent clause).