Independent & Dependent Clauses

A clause is a group of words containing a subject and a verb. Often, we use both dependent (subordinate) and independent (main) clauses in sentences, making them more complex.

Independent Clauses
An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence. It contains a subject, a verb, and often an object or complement.

Examples:  
The eggs are rotten.  
They were left out in the hot sun.

Dependent Clauses
A dependent clause cannot stand alone as a sentence; it must be accompanied by an independent clause. To join a dependent and independent clause in a sentence, a subordinating conjunction must be used.

Examples:  
Subordinating Conjunction Because they were left out in the hot sun, the eggs are rotten.  
Independent Clause  
Dependent Clause

Subordinating Conjunction Although the eggs are rotten, Howard boiled them.  
Independent Clause  
Dependent Clause

Variations
The examples above show dependent clauses placed in front of independent clauses with a subordinating conjunction (S.C.) linking the two at the beginning of the sentence. However, dependent clauses can also be placed after independent clauses in a sentence.

Example:  
The eggs are rotten because they were left out in the hot sun.  
Independent Clause  
S. C.  
Dependent Clause

Placing the independent clause at the beginning makes the subject clear for the reader, and the sentence is simpler and more straightforward.

Common Subordinating Conjunctions
The following chart is adapted from Fowler & Aaron (2010, p. 251).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause/Effect</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Comparison / Contrast</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Concession</th>
<th>Space or Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As</td>
<td>Even if</td>
<td>Whenever</td>
<td>As</td>
<td>Although</td>
<td>After</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because</td>
<td>If</td>
<td>Since</td>
<td>As if</td>
<td>As if</td>
<td>As long as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In order that</td>
<td>If only</td>
<td>When</td>
<td>As though</td>
<td>Even if</td>
<td>Before</td>
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<tr>
<td>Since</td>
<td>Provided</td>
<td>Whether</td>
<td>Rather than</td>
<td>Though</td>
<td>Now that</td>
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<td>So that</td>
<td>Unless</td>
<td>While</td>
<td>While</td>
<td>Even though</td>
<td>Once</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information for this handout was compiled from the following source: