Combining Independent and Dependent Clauses

According to the Purdue OWL, an independent clause is “a group of words that contains a subject and verb and expresses a complete thought.” A dependent clause is “a group of words that contains a subject and verb but does not express a complete thought.”

Combining Two Independent Clauses

• Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (connecting word).

\[
\text{Independent clause,} \begin{cases} \text{and} \\ \text{but} \\ \text{or} \\ \text{nor} \\ \text{for} \\ \text{yet} \\ \text{so} \end{cases} \text{ independent clause.}
\]

*Example: I was tired after working all day, so I decided to go to bed early.*

• Use a semicolon between two independent clauses with no coordinating conjunction.

\[
\text{Independent clause ; independent clause.}
\]

*Example: I was tired from working all day; I decided to go to bed early.*

• Use a semicolon before and a comma after the conjunctive adverbs (connecting words) listed below.

\[
\text{Independent clause; } \begin{cases} \text{accordingly} \\ \text{also} \\ \text{besides} \\ \text{consequently} \\ \text{furthermore} \\ \text{however} \\ \text{moreover} \\ \text{nevertheless} \\ \text{otherwise} \\ \text{then} \\ \text{therefore} \\ \text{thus} \\ \text{still} \end{cases} \text{ independent clause.}
\]

*Example: I was tired from working all day; therefore, I decided to go to bed early.*
Combining Independent Clauses with Dependent Clauses

- When the dependent clause begins with a subordinating conjunction (connecting word) and precedes the independent clause, separate the clauses with a comma.

Example: Since I was tired, I decided to go to bed.

- When the dependent (subordinate) clause follows the independent clause, don’t use a comma before or after the subordinating conjunction (connecting word).

Example: I decided to go to bed since I was tired.

After Although Even though Though As As if As though As long as Because Before If So/So that Since Until Whatever When Whenever Where Wherever Whether While

dependent clause,
Subordinate clauses are dependent. They can’t stand alone as complete sentences because they begin with a subordinating conjunction.

independent clause.
Independent clauses can stand alone as complete sentences.

dependent clause.
Subordinate clauses are dependent. They can’t stand alone as complete sentences because they begin with a subordinating conjunction.

Example: I decided to go to bed since I was tired.