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Grammar Practice

MAIN AND SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

A **main clause** is a group of words that contains a complete subject and a complete predicate. Also known as an **independent clause**, a main clause can stand alone as a complete sentence.

Tyler read the morning paper. (main clause)

A **subordinate clause** also contains a subject and a predicate, but it cannot stand alone. Because it depends on a main clause to make sense, it is also known as a **dependent clause**. A subordinate clause usually begins with a **subordinating conjunction**.

While he ate his toast [subordinate clause], Tyler read the morning paper.

SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Time: after, as, as soon as, before, since, until, when, whenever, while

Place: where, wherever

Manner: as, as if, as though

Cause: because, inasmuch as, since, so that

Concession: although, even though, though

Condition: if, unless

A subordinate clause may also begin with a relative pronoun (such as *who*, *whose*, *whom*, *which*, *that*, or *what*). In some subordinate clauses, the connecting word also serves as the subject of the clause.

EXERCISE

Check (✓) the blank before each sentence that contains a subordinate clause.

1. ____ Louis Braille (1809–1852) lost his sight in an accident when he was three years old.
2. ____ When he was fourteen, he invented today’s most common system of writing for the blind.

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3. ____ In the Braille system, letters, numbers, and punctuation marks—even musical notes—are written in units called Braille “cells.”
4. ____ Each cell contains between one and six raised dots.
5. ____ Visually impaired people who have been taught Braille can read these raised dots with their fingertips.
6. ____ Because sixty-three unique combinations of dots are possible, Braille is quite flexible.
7. ____ The six positions in a cell are arranged in two vertical columns of three positions each.
8. ____ Each position in a cell is identified by a number.
9. ____ For example, the number one position is the upper left-hand corner of the cell.
10. ____ Immediately beneath it is the number two position.