1 Basic Parts of Speech I

Nouns
A noun is a word that denotes (or marks) a person, place, or thing. In a sentence, nouns answer the question who or what

A noun may be concrete (something you can touch, see, etc.).

Example 1: The dog ran after the ball.
In this sentence above, there are two concrete nouns:

   dog & ball

A noun may also be abstract (something existing in thought or as an idea but not having a physical or concrete existence).

Example 2: She possesses integrity.

Example 3: He was searching for love.
In the two examples above, the abstract concepts integrity and love are both nouns.

Adjectives
An adjective is a word that describes a noun. Adjectives may come before nouns, or they may come after a form of the verb to be (am, are, is, was, etc.)

Example 1: We live in a red brick house.
In this example, two consecutive adjectives, red and brick, both describes the noun house.

Write a sentence similar to the one above and mark the noun(s) and adjective(s).

Example 2: The girl is tall for her age.
In this example, the adjective tall appears after the verb ‘is’ and describes the subject ‘girl’.

Write a sentence similar to the one above and mark the noun(s) and adjective(s).

The handout was adapted from http://owl.english.
### Verbs

A verb is a word that denotes action, or a state of being, in a sentence.

Example 1: Beth *rides* the bus everyday.

In this sentence above, rides is the verb; it describes what the subject, Beth, is doing.

Example 2: Paul was an avid reader.

In this sentence above, was is the verb; it describes Paul’s state of being.

Example 3: Jackson was studying when I saw him last.

In some sentences, there may be a verb phrase consisting of a verb plus a helping verb, such as ‘was studying’.

### Adverbs

Just as adjectives modify nouns, adverbs modify, or further describe, verbs. Adverbs may also modify adjectives. (Many, though not all, adverbs end in -ly.)

Example 1: He waved *wildly* to get her attention.

In this example, the adverb wildly modifies the verb waved.

Example 2: The shirt he wore to the party was *extremely* bright.

In this example, the adverb extremely modifies the adjective bright, which describes the noun shirt.

Write a sentence similar to the one above and mark the verb(s) and adverb(s).

### NOTE:

Some words in a sentence may look like verbs but act as something else, like a noun or an adjective. These are called verbals.
2 Basic Parts of Speech II

**Pronouns**

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun in a sentence.

Example: *She* decided to go to a movie.

In the sentence above, *she* is the pronoun. Like nouns, pronouns may be used either as subjects or as objects in a sentence.

Example: *She* planned to ask *him* for an interview.

In the example above, both *she* and *him* are pronouns; *she* is the subject of the sentence while *him* is the object. Every subject pronoun has a corresponding object form, as shown in the tables below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Pronouns</th>
<th>Object Pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>Us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>Her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>Him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td>It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>Them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Articles**

Articles include *a*, *an*, and *the*. They precede (come before) a noun or a noun phrase in a sentence.

Example 1: They wanted *a* house with *a* big porch.

Example 2: He bought *the* blue sweater on sale.

In example 1, the article *a* precedes the noun house, and *a* also precedes the noun phrase big porch, which consists of an adjective (big) and the noun it describes (porch).

In example 2, the article *the* precedes the noun phrase blue sweater, in which sweater is the noun and blue the adjective.

Write two sentences below that include pronouns and articles. Mark the pronouns, label them as either subject pronouns or object pronouns, and mark the articles.

1. 

2. 

Note: This handout was adapted from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/
Conjunctions

A conjunction is a word that joins two independent clauses, or sentences, together.

Example 1: Ellen wanted to take a drive into the city, but the cost of gasoline was too high.

Example 2: Richard planned to study abroad in Japan, so he decided to learn the language.

In the examples above, both but and so are conjunctions. They join two complete sentences with the help of a comma. And, but, for, or, nor, so, and yet can all act as conjunctions.

The following words below can all act as conjunctions:

- and
- but
- for
- or
- so
- yet

Prepositions

Prepositions work in combination with a noun or pronoun to create phrases that modify verbs, nouns/pronouns, or adjectives.

Example 1: Ivy climbed up the brick wall of the house.

There are two prepositional phrases in the example above: up the brick wall and of the house.

The first prepositional phrase is an adverbial phrase, since it modifies the verb by describing where the ivy climbed. The second phrase further modifies the noun wall (the object of the first prepositional phrase) and describes which wall the ivy climbs.

Below is a list of prepositions:

- aboard
- about
- above
- across
- after
- against
- along
- amid
- among
- around
- at
- before
- behind
- below
- beneath
- beside
- between
- beyond
- by
- down
- during
- except
- for
- from
- in
- into
- like
- near
- of
- off
- on
- onto
- out
- over
- past
- since
- through
- through-out
- to
- toward
- under
- under-neath
- until
- unto
- up
- upon
- with
- within
- without

Write two sentences that contain a conjunction as well as a preposition. Mark the conjunction, the preposition, and the prepositional phrase.

1.

2.
Basic Parts of Speech III: Understanding How Words Play the Different Parts (Gerunds & Participles)

Many English words regularly function as more than one part of speech.

Take the word book for example:

- When you book a hotel room, it is a verb.
- When you read a good book, it is a noun.
- When you have book knowledge, it is an adjective.

Although there are several other words that can function as a noun, verb, and adjective without changing word forms, in most cases the word needs to be changed slightly in order to change function, as they do in verbals.

Verbals are verbs that have been changed to act as nouns or adjectives. Two kinds of verbals are:

**Gerunds & Participles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GERUNDS</th>
<th>PARTICIPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A gerund is a verbal that ends in -ing and functions as a noun.</td>
<td>A participle is a form of a verb that is used to indicate a past or present action and that can also be used like an adjective. In later handouts, we will be discussing how participles are used to indicate past and present actions, but for now we will just focus on how participles can be used as adjectives. There are two types of participles: present participles and past participles. Present participles end in -ing. Past participles end in -ed, -en, -d, -t, -n, or -ne as in the words saved, drunk, and split.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Traveling might satisfy your desire for new experiences. (Traveling is the gerund.)</td>
<td>- The crying baby had a wet diaper. (The present participle is 'crying' which acts like an adjective.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They do not appreciate my singing. (The gerund is singing.)</td>
<td>- The laughing girl went to school. (The present participle is 'laughing' which acts as an adjective.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My cat's favorite activity is sleeping. (The gerund is sleeping.)</td>
<td>- Please use your saved work to create your portfolio. (The past participle is 'saved' which is used as an adjective.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The police arrested him for speeding. (The gerund is speeding.)</td>
<td>- The drunk driver was arrested. (The past participle is 'drunk' which is used as an adjective)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Create two sentences uses gerunds:

1. 
2. 

Create two sentences uses participles:

1. 
2. 

Note: This handout was adapted from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/
Understanding how words act can be so tricky because the English language is ‘in a constant state of flux.’ As we just learned, verbs can be changed to act as nouns and adjectives. However, as the article below points out, nouns can also be changed into verbs.

You’ve Been Verbed
by Anthongy Gardner

From INTELLIGENT LIFE Magazine, Winter 2010
http://moreintelligentlife.com/content/ideas/anthony-gardner/youve-been-verbed

Mothers and fathers used to bring up children: now they parent. Critics used to review plays: now they critique them. Athletes podium, executives flipchart, and almost everybody Googles. Watch out—you’ve been verbed.

The English language is in a constant state of flux. New words are formed and old ones fall into disuse. But no trend has been more obtrusive in recent years than the changing of nouns into verbs. “Trend” itself (now used as a verb meaning “change or develop in a general direction”, as in “unemployment has been trending upwards”) is further evidence of—sorry, evidences—this phenomenon.

It is found in all areas of life, though some are more productive than others. Financiers are never lacking in ingenuity: Investec recently forecast that “Better-balanced autumn ranges should allow Marks & Spencer to anniversary tougher comparisons”—whatever that may mean. Politics has come up with “to handbag” (a tribute to Lady Thatcher) and “to doughnut”—that is, to sit in a ring around a colleague making a parliamentary announcement, so that it is not clear to television viewers that the chamber is practically deserted.

New technology is fertile ground, partly because it is constantly seeking names for things which did not previously exist: we “text” from our mobiles, “bookmark” websites, “inbox” our e-mail contacts and “friend” our acquaintances on Facebook —only, in some cases, to “defriend” them later. “Some lovers of the language deplore the whole business of verbing (Benjamin Franklin called it “awkward and abominable” in a letter to Noah Webster, the lexicographer, in 1789); others see it as proof of a vibrant linguistic culture. Steven Pinker, in his book “The Language Instinct” (1994), points out that “easy conversion of nouns to verbs has been part of English grammar for centuries; it is one of the processes that make English English.”

Reflection: As you work through this college-level writing course, you will be bombarding with many rules about how to use the English language. While it is important to master these rules (you will need to know them for the ACCUPLACER exam and to help you become more effective writers), it is also important not to get overwhelmed. A good way to do this is to become ‘word conscious’ - thoughtfully aware of how words are used in everyday life as well as in academic writing.

A good place to start is with your own language. Are there words that you have started using in the last few years that you have not used before (such as ‘texting’ or ‘friending’)? List some of these words and their parts of speech below.
# The Apostrophe

Apostrophes are most commonly used to:

1. form possessives of nouns
2. show the omission of letters (as in contractions)

## Possessives

Possessive nouns show who or what owns something.

Singular nouns are made possessive by adding an apostrophe and then an 's.

Examples:

- The boy's kite flew high in the sky.
- Horner's essay was very interesting.
- Foss's narrative is powerful.

- Plural possessives are formed by adding an apostrophe after the 's.

Example:

- The girls' kite flew high in the sky.
- The students' school was deteriorating.

- When a plural noun does not end with an 's, an apostrophe and then an 's are added.

Example:

- The men's truck was dirty.
- The children's school was deteriorating.

## Contractions

Apostrophes are used in contractions. A contraction is a word in which one or more letters have been omitted. The apostrophe shows this omission.

To use an apostrophe to create a contraction, place an apostrophe where the omitted letters would go.

Examples:

- don't = do not
- I'm = I am
- he'll = he will
- who's = who is
- shouldn't = should not
- didn't = did not
- it's = it is

**Important note:**

Apostrophes should not be used with possessive pronouns because possessive pronouns already show possession.

Examples:

- wrong: his' book
- correct: his book
- wrong: Who's dog is this?
- correct: Whose dog is this
- wrong: The group made it's decision.
- correct: The group made its decision.

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Note: This handout was adapted from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/
PRACTICE

Punctuate the following sentences with apostrophes according to the rules for using apostrophes:

1. Whos the party candidate for vice president this year?

2. The dogs bark was far worse than its bite.

3. Its important that the kitten learns to find its way home.

4. Horners career studying dinosaurs sounds fascinating.

5. The essays points are powerful, but it’s thesis is weak.
Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings. The following table lists some (although not all!) words that writing students commonly confuse. Become familiar with these words so you can be ready to correct homonym-related spelling errors on the ACCUPLACER as well as in your own work. It’s also a good idea to keep a list of the words you most commonly confuse in your writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>accept</th>
<th>there</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>except</td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>they’re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My insurance will accept the charges for the accident.</td>
<td>You can put your shoes over there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like all vegetables, except for asparagus.</td>
<td>Their shoes were dirty, so they left them outside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affect</td>
<td>They’re just walking around barefoot right now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effect</td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing the way you eat will affect your health.</td>
<td>too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t see what effect these new laws will have on me.</td>
<td>two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brake</td>
<td>I am going to the mall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>break</td>
<td>Jesse said she wants to go too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We are each looking for two new outfits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ensure</td>
<td>whose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insure</td>
<td>who’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John wants to ensure he will graduate next semester.</td>
<td>Whose scarf is this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary will insure her new car.</td>
<td>Who’s going to the movie with us?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fare</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair</td>
<td>you’re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t have money for the bus fare this morning.</td>
<td>Your dog is bigger than my dog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was only fair that the bus driver kicked me off the bus.</td>
<td>You’re going to have to keep him on a leash.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRACTICE

Read each sentence and fill in the blank with the correct word.

1. I will not be able to ____________________ the new job. (accept, except)

2. Please try not to ____________________ your new sunglasses. (lose, loose)

3. ____________________ going to the races this evening. (Their, They’re)

4. How does candy ____________________ your blood sugar? (affect, effect)

5. We had ____________________ much snow last winter. (to, too, two)

6. She ____________________ the capitals of every state. (new, knew)

7. ____________________ car is parked in the driveway? (Who’s, Whose)

8. April is the ____________________ month. (forth, fourth)

9. The ____________________ ingredients of bread are flour, water, and yeast. (principal, principle)

10. I would ____________________ all parents to have a dog. (advice, advise)

Edit the following sentences:

11. What kind of advise would Horner give students?

12. Foss uses to much slang in her writing.

13. You’re educational narrative may be vary different than mine.

14. I did not want to except the fact that I could not go to college, and I also want to insure that my children go to college.

15. My parents wanted there children to go college.
When you think about past writing assignments, were you ever told that you used incomplete sentences, sentence fragments, or run-on sentences? Did you understand what these were and how to correct them? If you are like many writing students, you may have had a vague idea about what was wrong with your sentences, but you may have been confused about how to fix these.

A lot of this confusion has to do with the fact that we speak differently than we write. For example, if you were asked to verbally answer the question:

“Why do you want to take this course?” You might respond: “Because I want to go to college.”

This is an incomplete sentence. Conversationally, it is a fine response; however, in formal writing, it is not.

To respond to this question in writing using Edited American English, you need to use a complete sentence with correct punctuation. Two possibilities might be:

“I want to take this class because I want to go to college.”

“Because I want to go to college, I want to take this course.”

In order to understand complete sentences and the punctuation rules within them, the next few handouts are going to go back to the basics and build from there. Before beginning to review the details about complete sentences, answer the questions on the back.
Directions: Think about your essay writing experiences in the past and in this class so far, and answer the following questions:

1. Have you/do you have trouble writing complete sentences?

2. If so, what did or what does confuse you most?

3. Is there a punctuation mark (a period, an exclamation point, a comma, etc.) that you are particularly confused about how to use in a sentence? What makes knowing how to use this mark confusing for you?
Understanding Sentences 2: Complete Sentences

Complete Sentences:

What is a complete sentence? A complete sentence is not merely a group of words with a capital letter at the beginning and a period or question mark at the end.

A complete sentence has three components:
1. a subject (the actor in the sentence)
2. a predicate (the verb or action), and
3. a complete thought (it can stand alone and make sense).

Some sentences can be very short, with only two or three words expressing a complete thought, like this:

- John waited.

This sentence has a subject (John) and a verb (waited), and it expresses a complete thought. We can understand the idea completely with just those two words.

Complete sentences can be expanded to contain a lot more information, like this:

- John waited for the bus all morning.
- John waited for the bus all morning in the rain last Tuesday.
- Wishing he'd brought his umbrella and dreaming of his nice warm bed, John waited for the bus all morning in the rain last Tuesday because his car was in the shop.

As your sentences grow more complicated, it gets harder to spot and stay focused on the basic elements of a complete sentence; however, if you look carefully at the examples above, you’ll see that the main thought is still that John waited—one main subject and one main verb. No matter how long or short the other sentence parts are, none of them can stand alone and make sense.

Being able to find the main subject, the main verb, and the complete thought is the first trick to learn for identifying complete sentences.

Incomplete sentences with no main verb:

- Fragment: An essay with deep thoughts and emotions.

- Possible Revision: An essay with deep thoughts and emotions is difficult to write.

- Fragment: A record of accomplishment beginning when you were first hired.

- Possible revision: A record of accomplishment began when you were first hired.

Incomplete sentences with no main subject:

- Fragment: By paying too much attention to polls can make a political leader unwilling to propose innovative policies.

- Possible Revisions: Paying too much attention to polls can make a political leader unwilling to propose innovative policies.

- Fragment: For doing freelance work for a competitor got Phil fired.

- Possible Revision 1: Doing freelance work for a competitor got Phil fired.

- Possible revision 2: Phil got fired for doing freelance work for a competitor.
Directions: Below are four examples of incomplete sentences. Please explain why they are incomplete (in complete sentences!) and suggest a possible revision.

1. **Incomplete Sentence:** A narrative about my intellectual journey.
   - Why is it incomplete?: _______________________________________
   - Possible Revision:

2. **Incomplete Sentence:** The way Megan Foss uses slang.
   - Why is it incomplete?: _______________________________________
   - Possible Revision:

3. **Incomplete Sentence:** By never giving up made Horner successful.
   - Why is it incomplete?: _______________________________________
   - Possible Revision:

4. **Incomplete Sentence:** So boring that I decided to leave.
   - Why is it incomplete?: _______________________________________
   - Possible Revision:
In order to understand how to recognize and create complete sentences, you need to understand clauses.

### Clauses
- Clauses are groups of words that contain a subject and a verb.
- There are two types of clauses: Dependent Clauses and Independent Clauses.

### An Independent Clause:
- An independent clause is a group of words that contains a subject and verb and expresses a complete thought.
- An independent clause is a complete sentence.

Example: Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz.

### A Dependent Clause:
- A dependent clause is a group of words that contains a subject and verb but does not express a complete thought. A dependent clause cannot be a sentence. Often a dependent clause is marked by a dependent marker word.

Example: When Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz . . . (What happened when he studied? The thought is incomplete.)

### Dependent Marker Word
A dependent marker word is a word added to the beginning of an independent clause that makes it into a dependent clause.

Examples of dependent markers are as follows: because, before, since, while, although, if, until, when, after, as, as if.

Note: This handout was adapted from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/
The sentences below appeared in papers written by students. Act as their editor, marking a C if the sentences in the group are all complete and an F if any of the sentences in the group is a fragment. Could you tell these writers why the fragments are incomplete sentences?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Then I attended Morris Junior High. A junior high that was a bad experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The scene was filled with beauty. Such as the sun sending its brilliant rays to the earth and the leaves of various shades of red, yellow, and brown moving slowly in the wind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>He talked for fifty minutes without taking his eyes off his notes. Like other teachers in that department, he did not encourage students’ questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Within each group, a wide range of features to choose from. It was difficult to distinguish between them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A few of the less serious fellows would go into a bar for a steak dinner and a few glasses of beer. After this meal, they were ready for anything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>It can be really embarrassing to be so emotional. Especially when you are on your first date, you feel that you should be in control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The magazine has a reputation for a sophisticated, prestigious, and elite group of readers. Although that is a value judgment and in circumstances not a true premise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>In the seventh grade every young boy goes out for football. To prove to himself and his parents that he is a man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>She opened the door and let us into her home. Not realizing at the time that we would never enter that door in her home again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>As Christmas grows near, I find myself looking back into my childhood days at fun-filled times of snowball fights. To think about this makes me happy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Making up his mind quickly. Jim ordered two dozen red roses for his wife. Hoping she would accept his apology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>They were all having a good time. Until one of Joe's oldest and best friends had a little too much to drink.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Although it only attained a speed of about twelve miles an hour. My old rowboat with its three-horse-power motor seemed like a high-speed job to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>With my brother standing by my side, I reached for the pot handle. Tilting the pot way too much caused the boiling water to spill.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A compound sentence is a sentence that contains two or more independent clauses.

Example: My professor is intelligent, and I have learned a lot from her.

In the sentence above, the first independent clause is “My professor is intelligent.”
The second independent clause is “I have learned a lot from her.”

Both of these clauses can stand alone; however, combining independent clauses into one longer sentence can make your writing more interesting. One way to combine sentences is to create compound sentences by using a conjunction (and, but, so, etc.) preceded by a comma, as in the example above. Another way is to join the two clauses with a semicolon (which will be explained in more detail in later handouts) and no conjunction.

Example: “My professor is intelligent; I have learned a lot from her.”

Sentence Error 1: Fused Sentences (also known as Run-On Sentences)

It is important to understand the definition of a compound sentence so that you don’t use what are known as fused sentences or run-on sentences. These errors happen when there are two independent clauses not separated by any form of punctuation.

Example of a Fused/Run-On Sentence: “My professor is intelligent I have learned a lot from her.”

Another Example:

Run-On: The grocery store was really packed with people there must have been a big sale today.

Correction 1: The grocery store was really packed with people. There must have been a big sale today.

• Here, the error has been corrected by simply breaking the run-on sentence into two sentences.

Correction 2: The grocery store was really packed with people, so there must have been a big sale today.

• In this case, the sentence has been corrected by adding a coordinating conjunction and a comma. This is a compound sentence.

Note: This handout was adapted from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/
Exercises:

1. He enjoys walking through the country. He often goes backpacking on his vacations.

In the sentence above, join the two independent clauses with one of the coordinating conjunctions (and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet), and use a comma before the connecting word.

________________________, and _________________________.

2. For the sentence above, join the two independent clauses using a semicolon (;).

________________________;_____________________________.

Explain what is wrong with the sentences below and correct.

3. They weren’t dangerous criminals they were detectives in disguise.

4. Our solar system has nine major planets only one is known to have intelligent life.

Look through some of your own writing throughout this course, and find examples of either compound sentences used correctly or examples of fused/run-on sentences. For all correct compound sentences, explain why they are correct. For all fused/run-on sentences, fix the errors.

5.

6.

7.
A complex sentence is a sentence that contains an independent clause and at least one dependent clause.

Example 1: “When Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz, it was very noisy.”
Example 2: “It was very noisy when Jim studies in the sweet shop for his chemistry quiz.”

Remember:

1. An independent clause is a group of words that contains a subject and verb and expresses a complete thought. An independent clause is a sentence.

   Example: “It was noisy.”

2. A dependent clause is a group of words that contains a subject and verb but does not express a complete thought. A dependent clause cannot be a sentence. Often a dependent clause is marked by a dependent marker word. Examples of dependent markers are as follows: because, before, since, while, although, if, until, when, after, as, as if.

   Example: When Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz . . . (What happened when he studied? The thought is incomplete.)

To make a complex sentence, you combine an independent clause with a dependent clause.

As the examples above show, you can either make a complex sentence starting with a dependent clause or starting with an independent clause. If you begin with a dependent clause, use a comma before adding the independent clause. If you begin with an independent clause, do not use a comma before adding the dependent clause. (You will gain more practice with comma use in later handouts).

Understanding how to best use complex sentences will help you immensely with writing thesis statements and topic sentences.
Examples and exercise: Label the dependent marker word, the independent clause, and the dependent clause in each pair of sentences:

1. Since Anyon has much experience as an educational researcher, she is able to make valid conclusions in her studies.

2. Anyon is able to make valid conclusions in her studies since she has much experience as an educational researcher.

3. If I controlled the US educational system, I would completely reinvent it.

4. I would completely reinvent the US educational system if I controlled it.

5. While I agree with X that school can be bad for children, I also agree with Y’s argument that schools can provide transformational experiences for students.

6. I agree with X’s argument that schools can provide transformational experiences for students because my own schooling was transformative.

7. Because my own school experiences were so traumatic, I completely agree with X’s argument that school is bad for children.