

Using Clauses

Once we understand clauses, we can apply that knowledge to punctuation and writing style.

Clause Punctuation

Remember that when an adverbial dependent clause comes before its independent clause, we set it off with a comma: D,I. If the independent clause comes first, then we use no comma: ID.

Wrong: Crane wrote more carefully, as the months wore on.

Wrong: As the months wore on Crane wrote more carefully.

Writing: Use Complex Sentences as Topic Sentences

These two paragraphs will illustrate the point that they make. One of the best uses for a D,I complex sentence beginning with an introductory dependent clause is to use it as a topic sentence for a new paragraph, with the dependent clause referring back to the paragraph above and the independent clause leading to the new topic.

If we use a complex sentence for a topic sentence, that provides a bridge between the main idea of the first paragraph and the main idea of the second paragraph. The bridge avoids any sharp break in thought in the reader's mind. The effect is smooth writing in which the reader is rarely lost or confused.

Writing: Match the Clause Structures to the Content

To describe a worried character's quick, anxious actions, you might use a series of short, simple sentences. To describe a series of connected thoughts, you might use compound or complex sentences. If an event is filled with energy, you might use gerund phrases as the subjects and direct objects of many sentences. The clause structure should reflect the reality.