Independent & Subordinate Clauses

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE

Definition: A clause that can stand alone as a single sentence. It follows the basic pattern of Subject + Verb.

Independent Clause		
The ice cream	melted	in the sun.
Subject	*Verb*	

SUBORDINATE CLAUSE

Definition: A clause that cannot stand alone; it must connect to an independent clause to form a sentence. It follows the pattern of Subordinating Conjunction + Subject (S) + Verb (V).

Subordinating Conjunctions (Sub.): after, although, as, as if, because, before, even though, if, in order that, rather than, since, so that, than, that, though, unless, until, when, where, whether, while

Independent Clause		*Subordinate Clause*	
The ice cream melted in the sun		before	it ran down my hand.
S	*V*	*Sub.*	*S V*

- Note: As you can see, "before it ran down my hand" is not a sentence on its own even though it contains a subject and verb. It is a subordinate clause.
- Do not confuse subordinate clauses with phrases that begin with subordinate conjunctions. A clause has a subject and a verb. A phrase does not have a subject and verb together; it cannot stand alone as a sentence. Note the differences below:

  Subordinate Clause: *Because Jay loves swimming*, I swim every day.
  Sub. S V

  Phrase: *Because of my school debt*, I have to work extra hours.
  Sub. Prep. Phrase

WAYS TO PUNCTUATE CLAUSES:

Independent Clause (IC) + Independent Clause

1) IC. IC.
2) IC; IC.
3) IC, for/and/nor/or/but/yet/so IC.

Independent Clause (IC) + Subordinate Clause (SC)

1) IC SC.
2) SC, IC.
3) IC SC, for/and/nor/or/but/yet/so IC.