

Lesson Plan: Dependent clauses — punctuation and positioning

Level	Advanced (C1–C2)
Time	60–90 minutes
Skills	Grammar, writing
Focus	Subordinate clauses at the front, middle, and end; comma use; embedding and stacking

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Use dependent clauses in varied positions (initial, medial, final) in complex sentences
- Punctuate dependent clauses correctly, including embedded and stacked clauses
- Understand how the position of a dependent clause affects emphasis and information flow
- Edit complex sentences for clarity and avoid overloaded or ambiguous structures

TARGET LANGUAGE (EXAMPLES)

Initial position — comma required

- Although the report was thorough, several key findings were absent.
- Having reviewed the evidence, the committee made its decision.
- Once the data is confirmed, we can proceed with the analysis.

Final position — comma optional

- The committee made its decision, having reviewed all available evidence.
- Several findings were absent although the report was otherwise thorough.

Medial (embedded) — commas required

- The director, who had been in the role for a decade, resigned unexpectedly.
- The proposal, though well-intentioned, lacked a realistic funding plan.

Stacked clauses — clarity issue

- 'The report, which was prepared by the team that had been working on the project since 2020, was presented to the board.' — too dense
- Revision strategy: split into two sentences or restructure.

LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up (10 min)

Task: Students move the dependent clause in a sentence to three positions.

- Compare: does the meaning change? Does the emphasis change?
- 'The flight was delayed because of the fog.' → move the dependent clause.

2. Presentation (15 min)

Task: Initial / medial / final dependent clauses: rules and punctuation.

- Initial: always use a comma after the clause.

- Medial: always use commas around the embedded clause.
- Final: comma is optional, used for pause/separation.
- Stacked/embedded: how many is too many?

3. Guided practice (10 min)

Task: Add punctuation to 5 complex sentences.

- Then: move the dependent clause to a different position and re-punctuate.
- Discuss: which version flows better in context?

4. Writing and editing task (25 min)

Task: Write a paragraph of 5–7 complex sentences using dependent clauses in varied positions.

- Then swap with a partner: correct punctuation and flag any overloaded structures.

5. Editing task (5–10 min)

Task: Simplify 3 overloaded sentences with multiple embedded clauses.

EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one:

1. Rewrite 6 simple sentences as complex sentences with dependent clauses in different positions.
2. Write a paragraph using at least 5 complex sentences with varied clause positioning.
3. Edit a text heavy with run-on dependent clauses: split, reposition, and repunctuate.