

SYNTAX IN READING AND WRITING



MARK
PENNINGTON



Aligned to Common Core Standards

Syntax in Reading and Writing

Inadequate ability to process the syntax of language results in the inability to understand what is heard, as well as what is read. Beyond word knowledge, it is the single most powerful deterrent to listening and reading comprehension.

J.F. Greene, 2011

The “study has shown a significant positive impact on writing outcomes when the grammar input is intrinsically linked to the demands of the writing being taught.”

Myhill, 2012

Syntax is the arrangement of words and phrases in sentences. The English grammatical system provides authors with many ways to construct sentences. Some sentence formations are simple, but many can be confusing, especially in expository texts. Students often struggle to understand sentences with more advanced syntactical constructions. However, the good news is that students can learn to identify these regularly occurring difficult constructions, understand how they affect the meaning of complicated sentences, and apply them in more sophisticated writing.

But how to teach and help students learn these syntactic language tools? Explicitly in isolation or implicitly in the context of reading and writing?

Critics of the explicit approach to grammatical instruction argue that rote learning of terms, rules, and identification practice does not transfer to improving reading and writing ability, and they have decades of research to support this conclusion.

Critics of the implicit approach argue that teaching grammatical terms is necessary to provide a language of instruction and that identification and application practice helps students understand their functions in sentences. Critics point out that implicit teaching is non-sequential and inefficient. William Van Cleave summarizes criticisms of the implicit approach (2018):

- No overarching framework when taught only as problems arise
- Not enough practice to internalize concepts
- No link made between writing and reading comprehension
- No development of common vocabulary/language to talk about sentence structure

The *Syntax in Reading and Writing* lessons provide a middle ground between the explicit and implicit camps:

- A common language of grammatical instruction and discussion that focuses on function, not rote memorization, and a language which clearly and repeatedly defines key terms
- An explicit sequence of instruction with clear definitions, examples, and explanations of how the syntactical features function within the sentence
- Practice in identifying and understanding complex syntactical sentence constructions to build reading comprehension—153 challenging sentences to dissect and explain
- Practice in sentence revision (kernels, combining, and expansion) and sentence creation

DIRECTIONS

The *Syntax in Reading and Writing* lessons apply the gradual release model of “I do it; we do it; you do it” to help students learn and apply the key syntactic language tools. The 18 parts of speech, phrases, and clauses lessons have been designed to take about an hour to complete, one lesson per week.

The lessons are each leveled from basic to advanced, so the teacher may select the components to teach and practice. All students complete the **Create It!** writing activity.

Basic ● **Proficient** ■ **Advanced** ◆ **Create It!** ♥♥♥

Each weekly lesson consists of these activities:

- Learn It!** Objective: Learn the syntactic language tools and their jobs in the sentence. **Learn It!** is an “I do it” (teacher notes used for display) and “We do it” (student notes) activity. The teacher displays, reads, and explains the selected content. The teacher asks, “What do you notice?” about the example sentences, and “What is the same or different?” to compare and contrast with other example sentences. Students highlight key points as modeled by the teacher and make marginal annotations on their lesson page.
- Identify It!** Objective: Identify the syntactic language tools in practice sentences. **Identify It!** is a “We do it” and “You do it” activity. The teacher uses guided practice to identify a few and releases responsibility to individual students or pairs to complete the rest on their own. The teacher provides the answers and students self-correct.
- Explain It!** Objective: Explain how the syntactic language tools affect the meanings of confusing sentences. **Explain It!** is a “We do it” and “You do it” activity, in which the teacher and students analyze and discuss how each tool affects the meanings of challenging, but grammatically correct sentences. Next, individual students or pairs match additional sentence examples with the reasons why each is syntactically challenging. The teacher provides the answers and students self-correct.
- Revise It!** Objective: Students revise the syntactically challenging sentences. **Revise It!** is a “You do it” activity. Students work individually or in pairs to identify the sentence kernel (subject-verb-complement) and expand it into a more comprehensible sentence. Students share their revised sentences and compare to the original ones.
- Create It!** Objective: Students apply what they have learned about the syntactic language tools in the writing context. **Create It!** is also a “You do it” activity. Students work individually to create their own short writing application in a variety of genre.
- Reinforce It!** Teachers help students find examples of all 153 syntactically challenging sentences in class and independent reading texts. Students write the **Syntactic Sentences** and explain why the syntax makes each sentence confusing.

Syntax in Reading and Writing Instructional Sequence

Parts of Speech and Subject-Verb-Complement Sentence Structure

1. Nouns and Subjects
 - a. Proper Nouns
 - i. Capitalization
 - ii. Singular and Plural Forms
 - iii. Titles
 - b. Common Nouns
 - i. Capitalization
 - ii. Singular and Plural Forms
 - iii. Collectives
 - iv. Articles
 - c. Sentence Subjects
 - i. Singular Verb Agreement
 - ii. Compound Verb Agreement
2. Verbs and Predicates
 - a. Physical Actions
 - b. Mental Actions
 - c. Tense
 - i. Present
 1. Singular Verb Agreement
 2. Plural Verb Agreement
 - ii. Past
 1. Singular Verb Agreement
 2. Plural Verb Agreement
 - iii. Future
 1. Singular Verb Agreement
 2. Plural Verb Agreement
 - iv. Predicates
 1. Simple
 2. Compound
 3. Identifying the Subject and Predicate
 - v. Helping Verbs as Verb Phrases
3. Adjectives
 - a. Coordinate with Comma Placement
 - b. Predicate Adjectives Following Linking Verbs
 - c. Hierarchical (Cumulative)
 - d. Adjectival Types and Order
 - e. Noun Phrases as Sentence Subjects

4. Pronouns
 - a. Singular Subject Case
 - b. Plural and Compound Subject Case
 - i. First Person Placement
 - c. Indefinite Singular and Plural Subject Case
 - d. Singular Object Case
 - e. Plural and Compound Object Case
 - i. First Person Placement
 - f. Singular Possessive Case
 - g. Plural Possessive Case
5. Adverbs
 - a. Modifying a Verb
 - b. Modifying an Adjective
 - c. Modifying an Adverb
 - d. Adverbial Types and Order
 - e. Conjunctive Adverbs
6. Conjunctions
 - a. Coordinate
 - i. Joining Words
 - ii. Joining Phrases
 - iii. Compound Subjects
 - iv. Compound Predicates
 - v. Joining Independent Clauses in Compound Sentences
 - b. Correlative Conjunctions
 - i. Joining Words
 - ii. Joining Phrases
 - iii. Joining Independent Clauses
7. Prepositions
 - a. Objects
 - b. Identifying the Preposition
 - c. Types of Prepositions
 - d. Identifying Subject and Predicates by Eliminating Prepositional Phrases
 - e. Comma Placement with Introductory Prepositional Phrases
8. Complements
 - a. Direct Objects
 - i. Reciprocal Pronouns
 - b. Predicate Nominatives
 - i. Reflexive Pronouns
 - ii. Intensive Pronouns
 - c. Predicate Adjectives
9. Types of Sentences and Moods
 - a. Declarative
 - b. Interrogative (Direct, Indirect, Rhetorical, and Tag Questions)
 - c. Imperative
 - d. Exclamatory
 - e. Passive Voice
 - f. Conditional

Phrases

10. Noun Phrases
 - a. Subjects
 - b. Objects
 - i. Direct
 - ii. Indirect
 - c. Identifiers (Predicate Nominatives)
 - d. Appositives
 - e. Gerunds
 - i. Subjects
 - ii. Objects
11. Adjective Phrases
 - a. Past Participles 307
 - b. Present Participles
 - c. Present Perfect Participles
 - d. Nominative Absolutes
 - e. Comparative Modifiers 306-313
 - f. Superlative Modifiers
12. Adverb Phrases
 - a. With Prepositional Phrases
 - b. With Infinitives
 - c. With Comparative Modifiers
 - d. With Superlative Modifiers
13. Verb Phrases: Helping, Linking, and the Progressive Tense
 - a. Past Participles
 - b. Present Participles
 - c. Helping Verbs
 - d. Modals (Conditionals)
 - e. Linking Verbs
 - f. Present Progressive
 - g. Past Progressive
 - h. Future Progressive
14. Verb Phrases: Perfect and Perfect Progressive Tenses
 - a. Present Perfect
 - b. Past Perfect
 - c. Future Perfect
 - d. Present Perfect Progressive
 - e. Past Perfect Progressive
 - f. Future Perfect Progressive
15. Infinitives as Nouns, Adjectives, and Adverbs
 - i. Present
 - ii. Past Participle
 - iii. Present Perfect Participle
 - iv. Past Perfect Participle
 - v. Continuous
 - vi. Perfect Continuous

Clauses

16. Noun Clauses

- a. Sentence Subjects
- b. Direct Objects
- c. Indirect Objects
- d. Objects of Prepositions
- e. Complements

17. Adjective (Relative) Clauses

- a. Restrictive
- b. Non-Restrictive

18. Adverb Clauses

- a. Most-Frequently Used Subordinate Conjunctions
- b. Most Common Subordinate Conjunctions

Adverb Clauses

Learn It! ●

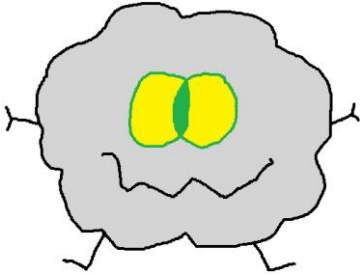
Remember that an *independent clause* has a noun and its connected verb that stands *on its own* as a simple sentence. A *dependent clause* has a noun and its connected verb that does *not* stand *on its own* as a complete thought. It *depends* upon its connection an independent clause. The dependent clause is less important to the meaning of the sentence than its connected independent clause. Together, the dependent and independent clauses form a complex sentence.

An adverb clause is a dependent clause. The adverb clause acts as an adverb to modify (identify, define, add to, limit, or describe) a verb, adjective, or another adverb in the connected independent clause by answering one or more of these questions: What degree? How? Where? or When? Additionally, adverb clauses frequently answer a Why? question.

The adverb clause can begin a sentence, come in the middle of a sentence to interrupt the independent clause, or end a sentence. It always begins with a *subordinate conjunction*. The prefix, *sub*, means *under* in *subordinate*, and it signals the reader that the adverb clause which follows is *under the authority* of its connected independent clause. The adverb clause certainly contributes meaning, but the independent clause is the most important thought of the sentence.

In this memory trick, the AA~~A~~WWUBBIS letters stand for the most frequently-used subordinate conjunctions. These subordinate conjunctions focus on the How? When? and Why? questions.

The AA~~A~~WWUBBIS*
Subordinate Conjunctions



**After, Although, As, When, While,
Until, Because, Before, If, Since**

*Credit Jeff Anderson for the AA~~A~~WWUBBIS memory trick.

Examples beginning with the AAWWUBBIS Subordinate Conjunctions:

After, Although, As, When, While, Until, Because, Before, If, Since

After I finished dinner, I did the dishes.

She did not pass the test, although she had studied.

As the player practiced, she improved her skills.

I was at the river, when the dam broke.

While the band played, the children sat quietly.

The band played until the wedding couple left.

The students, because they had a substitute teacher, did not behave well.

Before the parents arrived, the children had a party.

That disease, if not controlled, could spread quickly.

It should come as no surprise, since I already warned them.

Notice that an adverb clause is set off from independent clauses with commas unless the adverb clause ends the sentence.

Identify It! ●

Directions: Fill in the blanks with the correct **AAWWUBBIS** letter that matches the subordinate conjunction in each sentence. Letters may be used more than once. Also, insert commas where they are needed.

- ___ 1. It took nine hours to drive there although they did stop for lunch.
- ___ 2. “It’s not right if you want to know what I think and you care about justice,” she said.
- ___ 3. Hans said, “Before we go to my mother’s house we need to talk.”
- ___ 4. While he didn’t approve Mel did not state his objections.
- ___ 5. I didn’t feel horribly bad about John losing his money since I had warned him in advance.
- ___ 6. Please don’t start the car until I’m ready to leave.
- ___ 7. When Linda lets us help her we will gladly assist.
- ___ 8. Zoey gave us all a gift because she is always thoughtful and we brought her flowers.
- ___ 9. Can you wait to discuss this matter after we leave?
- ___ 10. As the world turns so time passes.

Explain It! ●

Adverb clauses can confuse the reader.

- A. Many times readers get confused about the meaning of a complex sentence, because the adverb clause may seem to contradict the thought of the independent clause.
Example: Despite the fact that she could be mean (the adverb clause), she was more than often quite nice (the independent clause).
- B. Readers often think that “unless” means *if*; however, *unless* actually has a negative meaning, not a conditional meaning.
Example: I won’t approve the design unless you make the background green.
- C. Readers frequently don’t understand that *although* is a subordinating conjunction which signals a contrast.
Example: Although our teacher was always kind, she was also always friendly.
- D. Reversible sentences which include reasons are more difficult to understand when the subordinate conjunction, “because,” begins a negative adverb clause.
Example: Andrew didn’t help the homeless in his city because he was kind-hearted.
- E. More than one adverb clause interrupting the sentence subject and its verb creates attention problems for the reader.
Example: The Department of Labor, when the number of available jobs decreases in areas where there is already high unemployment, understands that people suffer.
- F. Imperative (command) independent clauses which don’t specifically connect to the meaning of the adverb clause are difficult to understand.
Example: Jump out of a plane; climb a mountain; and tour the world while you still can.
- G. In adverb clauses, adverbs should modify the nearest verb, adverb, or adjective. Adverbs or adverb phrases which *dangle* on their own confuse readers.
Example: Upon entering the surgeon's office, a skeleton caught my attention.

Directions: Read the following sentences. Write the capital letter which best explains why the sentence is confusing in the space to the left of each number.

- ___1. Michelle acted selfishly among her friends even though she once shared her lunch with me.
- ___2. Because they did not leave that evening, they stayed for dinner.
- ___3. You won’t get any dessert unless you sincerely apologize to your sister.
- ___4. Whenever you are seated in a plane, there may be turbulence, so keep seatbelts fastened.
- ___5. Far away from the hospital drove the ambulance and its two paramedics.
- ___6. What the President of the United States, when the nation is in crisis and if television time is available, says is listened to by other world leaders.
- ___7. She wailed and moaned, crying uncontrollably, although she never knew who the injured football player was.

Revise It! ●

Directions: Fill in the sentence kernels. Next, expand them to clarify each confusing sentence.

1. Michelle acted selfishly among her friends even though she once shared her lunch with me.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

2. Because they did not leave that evening, they stayed for dinner.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

3. You won't get any dessert unless you sincerely apologize to your sister.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

4. Whenever you are seated in a plane, there may be turbulence, so keep seatbelts fastened.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

5. Far away from the hospital drove the ambulance and its two paramedics.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

6. What the President of the United States, when the nation is in crisis and if television time is available, says is listened to by other world leaders.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____


7. She wailed and moaned, crying uncontrollably, although she never knew who the injured football player was.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

Learn It! ■

Subordinate Conjunctions



Subordinate Conjunctions

Before, unless, despite (in spite of),
in order that, so,
while, if, since, even though (if)
because, until, that,
how, once, than,
After, Although (though), As (As if, As long as, As though),
Whether, When (Whenever), Where (Wherever)

With the **Bud is wise, but hot! AAA WWW** memory trick, the letters stand for the most common 29 subordinate conjunctions.

Another function of the adverb clause is to express the *conditional mood*. Although simple conditional sentences use *could, would, may, and might* to signal what *might take place* if certain conditions are met, the subordinate conjunctions can signal what *will take place* if the conditions are met.

Simple sentence can't express *if—then* and *cause—effect* relationships, but complex sentences with adverb clauses certainly can do so.

Examples:

Before I let you go to the party, I want to know more about the host.
She won't go unless you do.
If I give her the money, she won't have to work for it.
Darren will agree to the purchase after he reads the details of the contract.

Conditional sentences may also use subordinate conjunctions to signal a prediction, doubt, regret, guess, or a wish. Often, the subordinate conjunction, *that*, is used following these nouns or synonyms. The writer may choose to delete *that* if the sentence sounds better, but this subordinate conjunction is still implied (suggested).

Examples:

I'm sure she will like it once she tries it.
Whether Ivy will go to the movies or not, I don't know.
Although Linda seems prepared, she may not have practiced enough.
I so regret that I wasn't able to attend the funeral.
or
I'm so sorry I wasn't able to attend the funeral.

Identify It! ■

Directions: Write the subordinate conjunctions which best begin the adverb clauses in the numbered blanks below the phones.

1. _____ the fact that Kit was Bud’s sister, she never really understood
2. _____ smart her brother was. Bud never showed Kit his grades in school,
3. _____ she always bragged to him about hers.

Kit received a text from her friend 4. _____ she was walking home. It said,

< ♥ Anita Love
📞 🔍 ⋮

Tell me about your brother, 5. _____ you will. Bud is in my chemistry class, and he is so crazy smart! Bud is wise, but hot! 6. _____ you’re his sis, you have to admit 7. _____ he is very good looking! 8. _____ we are friends, would you mind asking Bud 9. _____ he thinks of me?

10. I asked him to grab a soda with me, do you think he would go?

Please text me back, 11. _____ soon as you can, 12. _____ that I will know what to do.

Also, what does Bud’s nickname for me mean? Bud keeps calling me “AAA WWW.”

13. _____ I tell him to stop. 14. _____ I wait for your reply, I’ll dream a bit more about Bud. LOL

< ♥ Anita Love
📞 🔍 ⋮

Bud is wise, but hot! AAA WWW

Bud: Before, unless, despite (in spite of); **is:** in order that, **so;**
wise: while, if, since, even though (if);
but: because, until, that;
hot: how, once, than!
AAA: After; Although (though);
As (As if, As long as, As much as, As soon as, As though)
WWW: Whether;
When (Whenever);
Where (Wherever)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____

Explain It! ■

Adverb clauses can confuse the reader.

- A. Although adverb clauses are less important to the meaning of sentences than independent clauses, clauses placed at the beginning of sentences may emphasize some words.
Example: Ice cream you certainly won't get if you don't do as I say.
- B. Readers understand complex sentences with clear subordinating conjunctions that *show* the relationships between ideas much better than short simple sentences which *imply* (suggest) their relationships.
Examples: We could not sit down. The benches had wet paint.
- C. Reversible sentences with cause-effect relationships are more difficult to understand when the subordinate conjunction, "because," begins the last clause in the sentence.
Example: She could hear music and laughing at the neighbor's because she went outside.
- D. Many subordinate conjunctions signal contrast, such as *unless, despite, in spite of, even though, although, whether*. If the contrast is not clear, the sentence can be confusing.
Example: In spite of the girl's strange reaction, the boys continued to tease her.
- E. When the helping verb, "had," is placed before the subject, the adverb clause becomes a conditional statement or a hypothesis that needs to be proven. The following independent clause may state a prediction or fact. These options may confuse readers.
Example: Had Cal known where the gold was hidden, he would have told me where to dig.
- F. Sometimes adverb clauses imply (suggest) the noun or pronoun and verb. Readers must mentally insert what is missing as they read. If a pronoun reference in the independent clause connects to what is implied, the sentence can be especially confusing.
Example: When within striking distance, the frog thrusts out its tongue to snag it.
- G. The independent clause is expected to include the most important information of the sentence, and the dependent clause usually includes what is less important. When the levels of importance are switched, the sentence can be confusing.
Example: The batter may put the bat on the ball though he strikes out 50% of the time.

Directions: Read the following sentences. Write the capital letter which best explains why the sentence is confusing in the space to the left of each number.

- ___1. They all placed fresh-cut flowers on her grave, when she died.
- ___2. Had you been more careful while you conducted the experiment, your conclusions might be better supported.
- ___3. If inside during an earthquake, stand in interior doorways until it is over.
- ___4. When dangerous surf conditions exist, you shouldn't swim in the ocean.
- ___5. Whether she finishes her dinner or she works on her homework, Sharon can't decide.
- ___6. She bought it on sale. It was not what she wanted.
- ___7. The children did not sleep much because they had a sleepover.

Revise It! ■

Directions: Fill in the sentence kernels. Next, expand them to clarify each confusing sentence.

1. They all placed fresh-cut flowers on her grave, when she died.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

2. Had you been more careful while you conducted the experiment, your conclusions might be better supported.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

3. If inside during an earthquake, stand in interior doorways until it is over.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

4. When dangerous surf conditions exist, you shouldn't swim in the ocean.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

5. Whether she finishes her dinner or she works on her homework, Sharon can't decide.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

6. She bought it on sale. It was not what she wanted.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

7. The children did not sleep much because they had a sleepover.

Kernel It! _____ | _____ | _____

Expand It! _____

Create It! ♥♥♥

Directions: Here's your chance to be a sports radio broadcaster! Call the action for an event, race, or series of plays, using adverb clauses at the beginning, middle, and end of complex sentences. Include a variety of relationships and subordinating conjunctions between the dependent clauses.



Adverb Clauses

- A 1. It took nine hours to drive there although they did stop for lunch.
- I 2. “It’s not right, if you want to know what I think, and you care about justice,” she said.
- B 3. Hans said, “Before we go to my mother’s house, we need to talk.”
- W 4. While he didn’t approve, Mel did not state his objections.
- S 5. I didn’t feel horribly bad about John losing his money since I had warned him in advance.
- U 6. Please don’t start the car until I’m ready to leave.
- W 7. When Linda lets us help her, we will gladly assist.
- B 8. Zoey gave us all a gift, because she is always thoughtful, and we brought her flowers.
- A 9. Can you wait to discuss this matter after we leave?
- A 10. As the world turns, so time passes.
-
- A 1. Michelle acted selfishly among her friends even though she once shared her lunch with me.
- D 2. Because they did not leave that evening, they stayed for dinner.
- B 3. You won’t get any dessert unless you sincerely apologize to your sister.
- F 4. Whenever you are seated in a plane, there may be turbulence, so keep seatbelts fastened.
- G 5. Far away from the hospital drove the ambulance and its two paramedics.
- E 6. What the President of the United States, when the nation is in crisis and if television time is available, says is listened to by other world leaders.
- C 7. She wailed and moaned, crying uncontrollably, although she never knew who the injured football player was.

Note that the subordinate conjunctions in the text messages will vary. Discuss the options with your students.

Adverb Clauses

- G 1. They all placed fresh-cut flowers on her grave, when she died.
- E 2. Had you been more careful while you conducted the experiment, your conclusions might be better supported.
- F 3. If inside during an earthquake, stand in interior doorways until it is over.
- A 4. When dangerous surf conditions exist, you shouldn't swim in the ocean.
- D 5. Whether she finishes her dinner or she works on her homework, Sharon can't decide.
- B 6. She bought it on sale. It was not what she wanted.
- C 7. The children did not sleep much because they had a sleepover.

Syntactic Sentences: Adverb Clauses

Explain It! ●

Adverb clauses can confuse the reader. Find examples of these syntactically challenging sentences in class and independent reading texts. Write the sentences that you find, and explain why the syntax makes each sentence confusing.

- H. Many times readers get confused about the meaning of a complex sentence, because the adverb clause may seem to contradict the thought of the independent clause.

Example: Despite the fact that she could be mean (the adverb clause), she was more than often quite nice (the independent clause).

- I. Readers often think that “unless” means *if*; however, *unless* actually has a negative meaning, not a conditional meaning.

Example: I won’t approve the design unless you make the background green.

- J. Readers frequently don’t understand that *although* is a subordinating conjunction which signals a contrast.

Example: Although our teacher was always kind, she was also always friendly.

Syntactic Sentences: Adverb Clauses

Explain It! ●

- K. Reversible sentences which include reasons are more difficult to understand when the subordinate conjunction, “because,” begins a negative adverb clause.

Example: Andrew didn’t help the homeless in his city because he was kind-hearted.

- L. More than one adverb clause interrupting the sentence subject and its verb creates attention problems for the reader.

Example: The Department of Labor, when the number of available jobs decreases in areas where there is already high unemployment, understands that people suffer.

- M. Imperative (command) independent clauses which don’t specifically connect to the meaning of the adverb clause are difficult to understand.

Example: Jump out of a plane; climb a mountain; and tour the world while you still can.

- N. In adverb clauses, adverbs should modify the nearest verb, adverb, or adjective. Adverbs or adverb phrases which *dangle* on their own confuse readers.

Example: Upon entering the surgeon's office, a skeleton caught my attention.

Syntactic Sentences: Adverb Clauses

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- H. Although adverb clauses are less important to the meaning of sentences than independent clauses, clauses placed at the beginning of sentences may emphasize some words.

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- I. Readers understand complex sentences with clear subordinating conjunctions that *show* the relationships between ideas much better than short simple sentences which *imply* (suggest) their relationships.

Examples: We could not sit down. The benches had wet paint.

- J. Reversible sentences with cause-effect relationships are more difficult to understand when the subordinate conjunction, "because," begins the last clause in the sentence.

Example: She could hear music and laughing at the neighbor's because she went outside.

Syntactic Sentences: Adverb Clauses

Explain It! ■

- K. Many subordinate conjunctions signal contrast, such as *unless*, *despite*, *in spite of*, *even though*, *although*, *whether*. If the contrast is not clear, the sentence can be confusing.

Example: In spite of the girl's strange reaction, the boys continued to tease her.

- L. When the helping verb, "had," is placed before the subject, the adverb clause becomes a conditional statement or a hypothesis that needs to be proven. The following independent clause may state a prediction or fact. These options may confuse readers.

Example: Had Cal known where the gold was hidden, he would have told me where to dig.

- M. Sometimes adverb clauses imply (suggest) the noun or pronoun and verb. Readers must mentally insert what is missing as they read. If a pronoun reference in the independent clause connects to what is implied, the sentence can be especially confusing.

Example: When within striking distance, the frog thrusts out its tongue to snag it.

- N. The independent clause is expected to include the most important information of the sentence, and the dependent clause usually includes what is less important. When the levels of importance are switched, the sentence can be confusing.

Example: The batter may put the bat on the ball though he strikes out 50% of the time.
