Dependent and Independent Clauses

A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb.

Examples:

1. Since you study (you=subject, study=verb)
2. you do well on exams (you=subject, do=verb)

An independent clause is a full sentence. It has a subject and a verb and it is independent: it can stand on its own as a grammatically correct sentence. If you saw an independent clause, you would consider it a complete sentence.

Examples:

1. you will excel in this class
2. he believes in me

A subordinate, or dependent clause is *not* a complete sentence. It's a fragment without a dependent clause to rely on.

Examples:

1. If you devote time to revision
2. while I was dreaming

You need to know how to identify and classify clauses so you can vary sentence length, especially through combining, and to avoid comma splices, run-ons, fragments, and other types of sentence errors.

Directions: Identify the **boldfaced words** as either independent clauses (IND) or dependent clauses (DP).

1. **He saw her from the bottom of the stairs** before she saw him.

2. **While they are buried beneath the frozen winter earth**, seeds lie like corpses within their graves.

3. With an eye made quiet by the power of harmony, **we see into the life of things**.

4. Out of my weakness and my melancholy, **he abuses me to damn me**.

5. **In order to possess what you do not possess**, you must go by the way of dispossession.

Directions: *Each of the following sentences has two clauses: one underlined, one **bold.** Identify each clause as independent or dependent.*

6. Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, **these pages must show**.

7. **If you can trust yourself when all doubt you,** the world will be yours.

8. Though it does not think, **the crowd is cheering**.

9. **The nineteenth autumn has come upon me** since I first made my count.

10. This anxiety is common to all **who set their sights on anything so high**.