Writing: Making Connections

Subordinate clauses are tools that all writers use to connect ideas. They are essential to explain your ideas clearly.

Examples: In each of the following sentences a bolded subordinate clause explains WHEN something happened.

- After he completed his assignment, Jack felt relieved.
- The governor warned people to stay at home until the virus stopped spreading.

Note: Commas are used in the first sentence to separate the subordinate clause from the independent clause because the sentence starts with a subordinate clause.
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**Practice 1:**

**Directions:** Identify the relationship between the independent and subordinate clause. Then, choose a word from the table above to connect the ideas. **THREE sentences will need a comma** to separate the subordinate clause at the beginning of the sentence from the rest of the sentence.

1. __________ Kiera woke up late because her alarm did not go off she still wasn’t late for school.

2. Dante placed extra money in his checking account __________ he could pay his bills and buy his girlfriend a graduation present.

3. __________ they won a difficult game against their close rivals the team celebrated by making a video.

4. __________ James did not want to go to the store for a week he bought two grocery carts full of food and household items.

5. Tasha was happy to stay at home and watch Netflix __________ she did missing seeing her friends at school.

**Directions:** As you read the following article, think about how the ideas are connected and how the writer could use subordinating conjunctions to clarify and develop their ideas.

The bolded comments will show how you can add subordinate clauses to your writing to make your writing more clear.

Even For Cashiers, College Pays Off--David Leonhardt
Almost a century ago, the United States decided to make high school nearly universal. Around the same time, much of Europe decided that universal high school was a waste. Not everybody, European intellectuals argued, should go to high school.

It’s clear who made the right decision. The educated American masses helped create the American century, as the economists Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz have written. The new ranks of high school graduates made factories more efficient and new industries possible.

Think About: Academic writing, writing you do for school, needs to be more clear and direct than newspaper articles. The writer of this article, David Leonhardt, could add a “because” to explain, clarify, and develop how education helped America become the world’s leader in the 1900s. By adding “because high school helped people learn how to be organized and manage their time.”

Today, we are having an updated version of the same debate. Television, newspapers and blogs are filled with the case against college for the masses: It saddles students with debt; it does not guarantee a good job; it isn’t necessary for many jobs. Not everybody, the skeptics say, should go to college.

The argument has the lure of counterintuition and does have grains of truth. Too many teenagers aren’t ready to do college-level work. Ultimately, though, the case against mass education is no better than it was a century ago.

The evidence is overwhelming that college is a better investment for most graduates than in the past. A new study even shows that a bachelor’s degree pays off for jobs that don’t require one: secretaries, plumbers and cashiers. And, beyond money, education seems to make people happier and healthier.

Think About: A bachelor’s degree is a degree from a four year college like Salisbury University while an associate’s degree comes from colleges like Wor-Wic Community College. A panacea in the next paragraph is something that will solve all problems.

“Sending more young Americans to college is not a panacea,” says David Autor, an M.I.T. economist who studies the labor market. “Not sending them to college would be a disaster.”

The most unfortunate part of the case against college is that it encourages children, parents and schools to aim low. For those families on the fence — often deciding whether a student will be the first to attend — the skepticism becomes one more reason
to stop at high school. Only about 33 percent of young adults get a four-year degree today, while another 10 percent receive a two-year degree.

So it’s important to dissect the anti-college argument, piece by piece. It obviously starts with money. Tuition numbers can be eye-popping, and student debt has increased significantly. But there are two main reasons college costs aren’t usually a problem for those who graduate.

First, many colleges are not very expensive, once financial aid is taken into account. Average net tuition and fees at public four-year colleges this past year were only about $2,000 (though Congress may soon cut federal financial aid).

Second, the returns from a degree have soared. Three decades ago, full-time workers with a bachelor’s degree made 40 percent more than those with only a high-school diploma. Last year, the gap reached 83 percent. College graduates, though hardly immune from the downturn, are also far less likely to be unemployed than non-graduates.

Think About: Instead of using “First” and “Second” as transition words, use subordinate clauses and repetition to connect your ideas for your reader. Instead of saying “Second,” as a writer you should say, “Even though reductions in federal financial aid may make college more expensive the returns from a degree have soared.”

Skeptics like to point out that the income gap isn’t rising as fast as it once was, especially for college graduates who don’t get an advanced degree. But the gap remains enormous — and bigger than ever. Skipping college because the pace of gains has slowed is akin to skipping your heart medications because the pace of medical improvement isn’t what it used to be.

Construction workers, police officers, plumbers, retail salespeople and secretaries, among others, make significantly more with a degree than without one. Why? Education helps people do higher-skilled work, get jobs with better-paying companies or open their own businesses.

Think About: Always ask yourself “Why” as a writer, but don’t place the question in the text! Just use subordinate clauses to explain why.

This follows the pattern of the early 20th century, when blue- and white-collar workers alike benefited from having a high-school diploma. The general skills that high schools taught throughout the 20th century and colleges continue to develop, like discipline and persistence, may be more important than academics anyway.
None of this means colleges are perfect. Many have abysmal graduation rates. Yet the answer is to improve colleges, not abandon them. Given how much the economy changes, why would a high-school diploma forever satisfy most citizens’ educational needs?

**Practice:**

1) Use a sentence with a subordinate clause to explain why the writer thinks people should go to college.

2) Complete the following sentence frame to connect the opposing perspective to the article’s ideas.

**Although there are numerous reasons for people to attend college,** some critics believe

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____________________________________________________________________________.
