

SUBORDINATING IDEAS

Subordinating an idea indicates that you consider it less important than another idea. A sentence that contains a primary idea and subordinate idea(s) can act as a good thesis statement because it can suggest a focus for a paper and provide some of the reasoning behind your views. Subordinating ideas also helps you make smooth transitions between sentences and paragraphs.

Suppose you want to combine these ideas:

Fewer and fewer oysters are left in the Chesapeake Bay.

Increasing numbers of fishermen tong for oysters during the bleak winter months.

You can combine the statements to emphasize the increasing number of fishermen (which becomes your primary idea):

Increasing numbers of fishermen tong for oysters during the bleak winter months so that fewer and fewer oysters are left in the Chesapeake Bay.

You could also write the sentence to have your primary idea be the fact that fewer oysters are left:

Fewer and fewer oysters are left in the Chesapeake Bay because increasing numbers of fishermen tong for oysters during the bleak winter months.

In both examples, the primary idea could stand alone as a complete sentence, whereas the subordinate ideas begin with subordinating conjunctions *so that* and *because*. These words indicate that what follows receives less weight in the sentence.

Some subordinating conjunctions are listed below and are grouped according to the relationships they signal.

Contrast: *although, even though, while*

Degree: *inasmuch as, insofar as, to the extent that*

Cause: *because, since, as*

Time: *when, whenever, while, once, before, after, since, until, as long as, as soon as*

Condition: *if, when, provided that, in case, assuming that, as long as*

Place: *where, wherever*

Negative Condition: *unless*

Alternative Condition: *whether or not*