

Coordination and Subordination

Parts of a sentences can be emphasized or deemphasized, depending on how those parts are written. If your sentences contains two parts, and you want both parts of your sentence to carry the same emphasis, then you are practicing sentence coordination.

The dog is fast, and the cat is fast. (equal parts)

If you want one part of your sentence to be more important than the other part, then you are practicing subordination.

Although the dog is fast, the cat is faster. (unequal parts)

When practicing subordination, the main idea should be in the independent clause and the lesser idea should be in the dependent clause.

In our example “Though the dog is fast, the cat is faster,” the main idea is the independent clause: “The cat is faster.” The first part of the sentence, “Though the dog is fast,” is a dependent clause and of less importance than the cat being faster

Of course, we can rewrite the subordinate sentence to change the emphasis. If we wanted the dog to be the most important part of the sentence (and assuming he actually was the faster of the two animals), then it would read like this:

Though the cat was fast, the dog was faster.

All we did was shift the placement of the dog in the sentence.

Diana Hacker offers the following list of words that are often employed in subordinate clauses:

after, although, as, as if, because, before, if, since, that, though, unless, until, when, where, whether, which, while, who, whom, whose.

Often, subordination compares two things or shows a relationship between two things, and for this reason, one of the above words is typically needed.