

Introductory Clauses

SUU Writing Center

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****This tipsheet assumes that you know the difference between independent and dependent clauses. If you need more information on that difference, ask a tutor or see the tipsheet on that subject.***

<p><i>Definition:</i> An introductory clause is a dependent clause that introduces the <i>main</i> sentence (often called an independent clause). It requires a comma. In other words, it is a fragment that comes before the independent clause and is separated from it with a comma. Here are a few examples of words that are often used to begin introductory clauses that need a comma: <i>after, although, as, as if, because, even, even though, if, since, unless, until, when.</i></p> <p>Note: Starting sentences with introductory clauses allows writers to avoid repeating the same kind of sentence opening over and over and over again. See the Sentence Variety tipsheet for more help on eliminating repetition in sentence style.</p>	<p><i>After the rain stopped,</i> a rainbow appeared.</p> <p><i>Before you begin the test,</i> you should read the instructions.</p> <p><i>After we finally arrived at our hotel,</i> we decided to find a nice restaurant.</p>
<p><i>Comma usage after introductory clauses:</i> Commas are used in introductory clauses to avoid misunderstanding by clarifying elements and their relationships. See the examples at right for more concrete explanation of this rule.</p>	<p>[<i>After the new PE building opened</i> the old one became a Multipurpose Center. [Incorrect: Without the comma, the sentence could be confusing. Did the new PE building open the old one?]</p> <p><i>After the new PE building opened,</i> the old one became a Multipurpose Center. [Correct: Now the meaning of the introductory clause is clear.]</p>
<p><i>Comma usage after other introductory word groups:</i> You might find it useful to remember that many professors expect you to place a comma after ANY introductory word group.</p>	<p><i>After lunch,</i> the dog took a nap.</p> <p><i>Closing his weary eyes,</i> the dog took a nap.</p>

