SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

CEFR Level C1 — Advanced

English Language Worksheets | 4 Worksheets + Answer Key

Worksheet 1: Advanced Subordination

At C1, the three types are assumed. Focus: embedding, subjunctive, extraposition.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Key structures at C1

Structure	Function & Notes	Example
extraposition	Heavy noun clause moved to the end; dummy 'it'	"It is unclear whether the fund is solvent."
mandative subjunctive	insist / essential + that + base form	"It is vital that he be informed."
multiple embedding	A clause inside a clause inside a clause	"He said that the woman who called claimed that she knew."
non-finite subordination	-ing / -ed / to-inf; compresses and de-tenses	"Pressed for time, she omitted the caveat."
verbless clause	Subject and verb both ellipted	"Though thorough, the report is silent on cost."
concessive fronting	'Much as / However / Whatever' + clause	"However compelling the data, the thesis fails."
nominal relative	'what / whatever' = the thing(s) which	"What troubles me is the silence."
subordination as demotion	Bury a claim in a subordinate clause	"The minister, who twice misled the House, denies it."

PART A — **Complete the sentences**

Fill in each gap with an appropriate word or phrase. More than one answer may be possible.

1. _____ compelling the evidence, the committee refused to act.
2. It is imperative that the witness _____ protected at all costs.
3. _____ the report omits is any mention of the earlier warnings.
4. _____ remains unclear whether the two accounts can be reconciled.
5. _____ for time, the auditors signed off without checking.
6. _____ thorough, the review is silent on the question of blame.
7. The chair, _____ own firm won the tender, saw no difficulty.
8. Much _____ I admire her candour, I cannot accept her conclusion.

PART B — **Error analysis**

Identify and correct the error in each sentence. Then note the rule violated.

1 “The board insisted that he resigns immediately.”
Correction: _____
Rule: _____

2 “Having examined the accounts, several irregularities emerged.”
Correction: _____
Rule: _____

3 “That the auditors had been dismissed three weeks before the collapse was known to the board.”
Correction: _____
Rule: _____

4 “I wonder whether will they publish the findings.”
Correction: _____
Rule: _____

Score: _____ / 20

Worksheet 2: Register, Density & Cohesion

Hypotaxis, nominalisation and the syntax of formality.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — The register spectrum

Depth of subordination is itself a register marker. Study the tables.

Informal / plain	Neutral	Formal / academic
He didn't come, so we left.	Because he didn't come, we left.	In his absence, the meeting was adjourned.
I think he's wrong.	I believe that he is mistaken.	It is arguable that his position is untenable.
She was tired but carried on.	Although she was tired, she continued.	Tired though she was, she continued.

Term	Definition & effect
hypotaxis	clauses ranked by subordination — analytical, hierarchical
parataxis	clauses side by side, equal rank — plain, urgent
embedding depth	clauses nested inside clauses — precision at the cost of readability
nominalisation	clause → noun phrase (‘that he failed’ → ‘his failure’) — agentless, dense

PART B — Register transformation

Rewrite each sentence in the register indicated.

1 Although he was inexperienced, he was appointed.
→ _____ *(concessive fronting: ‘Inexperienced though…’)*

2 That the committee failed to consult residents caused the dispute.
→ _____ *(nominalise the subject)*

3 We don't know if the treaty will hold.
→ _____ *(extraposition + ‘whether’)*

4 The panel said it was necessary for the rules to be changed.
→ _____ *(mandative subjunctive)*

PART C — Verdicts

Decide whether each sentence is (a) standard, (b) acceptable but marked/stylistic, or (c) a genuine error. Justify in one sentence.

1 “It is essential that every member be present.”
Verdict: (a)/(b)/(c) Justification: _____

2 “What concerns me is that nobody has resigned.”
Verdict: (a)/(b)/(c) Justification: _____

3 “That the scheme would fail was obvious to anyone who had read the costings.”
Verdict: (a)/(b)/(c) Justification: _____

4 “The minister denied that he knew about the payments which were made to the contractor whose brother sat on the board that awarded the contract.”
Verdict: (a)/(b)/(c) Justification: _____

5 “She asked me did I want to stay.”
Verdict: (a)/(b)/(c) Justification: _____

Score: _____ / 25

Worksheet 3: Academic Writing & Critical Analysis

How subordination ranks ideas and conceals agency.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — **Analytical reading**

> *What a writer subordinates, a reader tends to accept. Consider the sentence: 'The minister, who had twice been warned, denies any knowledge.' The warning, though the more damning fact, occupies a relative clause; the denial, though self-serving, occupies the main clause and thus the position of assertion. It is not that the writer has lied. Nothing false has been said. Yet the architecture instructs us: attend to the denial, concede the warning. That subordination should carry this much ethical weight is rarely acknowledged, perhaps because grammar is taught as though it were arithmetic — a system of rules rather than a set of choices, each of which decides what the reader is permitted to notice.*

1. Identify FIVE subordinate structures and classify each (noun, relative, adverbial, non-finite, verbless, nominal relative).

_____

_____

_____

2. 'What a writer subordinates, a reader tends to accept.' Name the clause type and explain the effect of its position.

_____

_____

3. Rewrite the minister sentence so that the warning occupies the main clause. What changes ethically?

_____

_____

4. 'That subordination should carry this much ethical weight is rarely acknowledged.' Identify the structure and rewrite it with extraposition. Why might the writer have resisted extraposition here?

_____

_____

PART B — **Sentence transformation**

Rewrite each sentence according to the instruction. Preserve the meaning.

1. Original: "The council did not consult residents. This caused the dispute."
   Task: combine using a nominal relative as subject.
   → _____

2. Original: "The auditors were under pressure, so they omitted the caveat."
   Task: reduce to a non-finite clause.
   → _____

3. Original: "It was obvious that the scheme would fail."
   Task: front the that-clause as subject. Comment on end-weight.
   → _____

4 Original: “The report is thorough, but it says nothing about cost.”
Task: rewrite with a verbless concessive clause.
→ _____

5 Original: “The panel said the rules had to be changed.”
Task: rewrite with a mandative subjunctive.
→ _____

PART C — Guided essay paragraph

Write a paragraph of 120–150 words arguing ONE position below. Include at least FOUR distinct structures from Worksheets 1–2; keep the register formal-academic.

Position A: What a writer subordinates is an ethical choice, not a stylistic one.
Position B: Complex subordination reflects complex thought, not evasion.

My position: ___ A ___ B

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Word count: _____

Score: _____ / 30

Worksheet 4: Synthesis, Data Interpretation & Argumentation

Deploy subordination to interpret evidence and rebut claims.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — **Interpreting complex data**

Study the table analysing subordination in five text genres (depth = average levels of clause embedding).

Genre	Subord. clauses /100w	Embedding depth	Non-finite (%)	Readability (/100)
Legal contract	24	3.4	38	19
Broadsheet news	13	1.6	22	54
Academic article	21	2.8	41	31
Children's fiction	6	1.1	9	82
Political speech	11	1.9	17	61

Write six analytical sentences using the data. Apply the constraints below.

1. [Use a nominal relative as the subject ('What the data show …').]

_____

_____

2. [Use extraposition with dummy 'it'.]

_____

_____

3. [Use a concessive fronting ('Dense though …' / 'However …').]

_____

_____

4. [Use a non-finite subordinate clause.]

_____

_____

5. [Use a verbless clause.]

_____

_____

6. [Acknowledge a limitation using a mandative subjunctive or a hedged that-clause.]

_____

_____

PART B — **Adversarial comparison (debate format)**

Write a two-sentence counter-argument that concedes part of each claim but challenges it from another angle. Use formal register and at least one advanced subordinate structure per response.

1. Claim: "Legal contracts prove that subordination destroys readability."

Hint: consider what a contract must achieve that a novel need not.

Counter-argument:

_____

2. Claim: “Children's fiction shows that good writing simply avoids subordinate clauses.”
Hint: consider the intended reader, not the writer's skill.

Counter-argument:

3. Claim: “Academic articles and legal contracts are equally evasive: both embed deeply.”
Hint: compare their non-finite percentages and purposes.

Counter-argument:

PART C — Extended writing task

Write a discursive essay introduction (180–220 words) on the proposition below. Use at least FIVE distinct subordinate structures from this unit (underline them). Maintain a formal-academic register; present the proposition, acknowledge its complexity, and signal your line of argument.

“The depth of a writer's subordination reveals the depth of their thought — or the extent of their evasion.”

Word count: _____ Structures underlined: _____ / 5

Score: _____ / 35

ANSWER KEY & TEACHER NOTES

For teacher use only — C1 Level Worksheets

Subordinate Clauses | English Language Worksheets

Worksheet 1 – Gap Fill

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
1	___ compelling the evidence	**However (concessive fronting)**
2	imperative that the witness ___ protected	**be (mandative subjunctive, passive)**
3	___ the report omits	**What (nominal relative as subject)**
4	___ remains unclear whether	**It (extraposition, dummy subject)**
5	___ for time, the auditors	**Pressed (non-finite -ed clause)**
6	___ thorough, the review is silent	**Though (verbless concessive clause)**
7	the chair, ___ own firm won	**whose (relative, possession)**
8	Much ___ I admire her candour	**as ('much as' = concessive)**

Worksheet 1 – Error Analysis

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
1	insisted that he resigns	**… that he resign. — 'insist' triggers the mandative subjunctive (base form)**
2	Having examined … irregularities emerged	**Having examined the accounts, I found several irregularities. — dangling participle: the implied subject must be the subject of the main clause**
3	heavy fronted subject clause	**It was known to the board that the auditors had been dismissed three weeks before the collapse. — end-weight: extrapose the heavy clause**
4	whether will they publish	**I wonder whether they will publish the findings. — a noun clause takes statement word order, not inversion**

Worksheet 2 – Parts B & C

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
B1	concessive fronting	**Inexperienced though he was, he was appointed.**
B2	nominalisation	**The committee's failure to consult residents caused the dispute.**
B3	extraposition	**It is not known whether the treaty will hold.**
B4	subjunctive	**The panel said that it was necessary that the rules be changed. / The panel recommended that the rules be changed.**
C1	essential that … be present	**(a) Standard mandative subjunctive**
C2	What concerns me is that …	**(a) Standard — nominal relative as subject, that-clause as complement**
C3	That the scheme would fail was obvious …	**(b) Marked — grammatical, but the fronted heavy subject strains end-weight; 'It was obvious that …' is the unmarked order**

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
C4	quadruple embedding	**(b) Marked — grammatical but taxing: four levels of embedding (that / which / whose / that) test the reader's memory**
C5	She asked me did I want	**(c) Error — the noun clause requires statement order: 'She asked me whether I wanted to stay.'**

Worksheet 3 – Part A (Passage Analysis)

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
Q1	Five structures + types	**'What a writer subordinates' (nominal relative, object fronted); 'who had twice been warned' (relative); 'though the more damning fact' (verbless concessive); 'that the writer has lied' (noun, complement); 'That subordination should carry this much ethical weight' (noun, subject); 'because grammar is taught …' (adverbial reason); 'as though it were arithmetic' (adverbial manner); 'each of which decides …' (relative)**
Q2	'What a writer subordinates …'	**A nominal relative clause, fronted as the object. Fronting it makes the subordinated material itself the topic, enacting the sentence's own claim: what is placed first commands attention.**
Q3	reversing the minister sentence	**e.g. 'The minister, who denies any knowledge, had twice been warned.' The warning now occupies the position of assertion and the denial is demoted to a concession — the same facts, the opposite implication.**
Q4	fronted that-clause	**A noun clause as subject. Extraposed: 'It is rarely acknowledged that subordination should carry this much ethical weight.' The writer resists extraposition so that the proposition itself — not the dummy 'it' — occupies the subject position, performing the very prominence the passage argues for.**

Worksheet 3 – Part B (Transformations)

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
1	nominal relative	**What caused the dispute was the council's failure to consult residents.**
2	non-finite	**Under pressure, the auditors omitted the caveat. / Being under pressure, …**
3	front the that-clause	**That the scheme would fail was obvious. — grammatical but marked: it violates end-weight, so the fronting must be doing deliberate rhetorical work**
4	verbless concessive	**Thorough though it is, the report says nothing about cost.**
5	subjunctive	**The panel recommended that the rules be changed.**

Worksheets 3–4: Extended & Creative Tasks — Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor	Marks
Structural range	Uses 4–5 distinct subordinate structures accurately	0–4
Register	Consistently formal-academic; subordination matches purpose	0–3
Argumentation	Clear line of argument; clause ranking serves the reasoning	0–3
Accuracy	No errors in subjunctive, reduction, or punctuation	0–2
Coherence	Information hierarchy clear; end-weight respected	0–3

Worksheet 4 – Part A (Model sentences)

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
1	nominal relative	**What the data show is an almost perfect inverse relation between embedding depth and readability.**
2	extraposition	**It is striking that academic articles employ more non-finite clauses than contracts do.**
3	concessive fronting	**Dense though the legal contract is, its subordination serves precision rather than evasion.**
4	non-finite	**Written for the youngest readers, children's fiction embeds barely at all.**
5	verbless	**Though rhetorical, the political speech subordinates less than the broadsheet news.**
6	limitation	**It is essential that any conclusion drawn here acknowledge that readability scores ignore the reader's expertise.**