A complex sentence has one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses.

Fossils, as you may know, are the remains of plants and animals that lived thousands or millions of years ago. (The two dependent clauses are underlined.)

Each dependent clause starts with words such as after, although, who, which, when, until, where, so that, and since. These clauses can tell where, when, and why something happened or can give more information about the people and things involved.

A. Understanding Complex Sentences

In each complex sentence below, find and underline the independent clauses with these words.

1. Scientists believe
   Fossils have been found
   Fossils indicate

Then underline each dependent clause twice.

1. Fossils have been found wherever scientists have searched hard.
2. Scientists believe that most species of plants and animals died out without leaving any fossils.
3. Fossils indicate that deserts were once sea bottoms.
4. Fossils that closely resemble living animals indicate that successful animals do not change much over time.
5. Because new evidence links birds and dinosaurs, scientists believe that birds may be the descendents of dinosaurs.
6. Although their exact age cannot be determined, fossils have been found in different layers of rock, which indicate relative ages.
7. Because nests of baby dinosaurs have been found, scientists believe that these ancient creatures cared for their young for some time.
8. Even though we cannot guess at the colors of prehistoric flowers, fossils indicate that flowering plants date from about 138 million years ago.

B. Understanding Complex Sentences

In each of these complex sentences, underline only the independent clause.

1. Since Eldon hates airplanes, he’ll probably take the train even though it is slow.
2. If you see Rita, please tell her to return my lunchbox that she borrowed last week.
3. Someone forgot to water the roses that grow in the side yard.
4. Wherever you go, you’ll find interesting people whom you can write about.
5. Although the farmer is ready, the ground is still too wet to plow.
A. Understanding Complex Sentences

In each of these complex sentences, underline each independent clause once and each dependent clause twice.

1. Until you change those strings, your banjo won’t sound very good.
2. Darryl looked after my dog while I was away.
3. Bring your backpack when you come to school today.
4. When my grandmother was young, she listened to Frank Sinatra records.
5. Unless I am wrong, peaches were first grown in China.
6. Linda will lend Wei the book when she has finished it.
7. The announcer whose voice is so pleasant has switched to the morning drive time.
8. Write about your experience while it is still fresh in your mind.
9. In this plan, you pay as you go.
10. None of the poems that I like best are in this anthology.

B. Identifying Kinds of Sentences

Identify each sentence below with S for simple, CD for compound, or CX for complex.

1. Scientists can determine the relative age of fossils from the layers of rock in which the fossils are found. ________
2. Fossils in lower layers are older; those in higher layers are younger. ________
3. The oldest fossils of any group of living things are simpler than the more recent fossils are. ________
4. To scientists, this is clear evidence that plants and animals change over time. ________
5. The oldest fossils are approximately 3.5 billion years old. ________
6. These ancient fossils are traces of bacteria, which are one-celled organisms. ________
7. Animals without backbones came into being about 700 million years ago, but animals with backbones did not appear until about 500 million years ago. ________
8. If you could travel in time, would you go to the time of the dinosaurs? ________
9. Even the air must have smelled different that long ago! ________
A. Creating Complex Sentences

Combine each numbered sentence with the first sentence that follows to make a complex sentence. Add, drop, or change words as needed. Write the new sentences below.

1. Evidence from fossils shows something. The continents have changed shape and position. (2) Dinosaurs appeared about 240 million years ago. All the continents were connected. (3) Fossils of mammals are very different from continent to continent. Mammals appeared about 40 million years later. (4) The first mammals lived about 200 million years ago. The continents had begun to split apart by that time.

1. ____________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________

4. ____________________________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________________________

B. Revising Complex Sentences

Underline the independent clause in each of these complex sentences. Then rewrite the sentence, keeping the independent clause but supplying a new dependent clause.

1. We ate the fruit because we were hungry.

2. After the curtain accidentally fell during her speech, the actress forgot her lines.

3. A statue that was sculpted by Rodin is on display at the museum.