

Linking Words (Conjunctions and Connectors)

Definition

Broadly speaking, conjunctions and connectors describe the relationship between two statements. These statements can be written without linking words, but often more information can be succinctly conveyed using these words. Conjunctions grammatically join two clauses (independent or dependent, depending on the conjunction) so that it reads as one sentence. Connectors are used between two separate sentences.

Type of conjunctions

There are four types of conjunctions: coordinating, correlative, subordinating, and conjunctive adverbs (discussed elsewhere). One sentence can contain multiple types of conjunctions, and often does.

Coordinating Conjunction	
Definition	These linking words <i>give equal value</i> to the two elements (nouns, adjectives, clauses, etc.) which they coordinate
Words used (limited list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And (<i>addition</i>) • or (<i>alternative</i>) • but (<i>contrastive</i>) • yet (<i>contrastive</i>) • nor (<i>negative</i>) <p style="margin-left: 150px;"><u>Note:</u> <i>For</i> and <i>so</i> are sometimes mentioned as coordinating conjunctions, but modern English rarely uses them anymore for that purpose. They are more commonly used as subordinating conjunctions.</p>
Grammar rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conjunctions must go between two elements (nouns, clauses, etc.) they link • Commas are optional EXCEPT for and and but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ and: if there are more than 2 elements being described, a comma must follow each element being connected. The and must come between the second to last and last element it links. For only 2 elements, no comma is necessary ○ but: a comma must always precede but • When to use nor vs. or: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ or: links nouns, adjectives, adverb phrases, or positive verb phrases. ○ nor: links a negative verb phrases. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nor is also often used with “neither.” See the last example sentence below as well as the correlative conjunctions section for more details.
Example Sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The graduate student had to teach section and take classes. • The graduate student had to teach section, take classes, and conduct research. • The service animal was not a pony, but a miniature horse. • He was exhausted yet very happy. • Mary had not gone to the store nor had she visited the gym. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note: Notice here that “not” could be replaced with “neither” and have the same meaning. This is a good way to check if you’ve used nor correctly.

Quick Practice: correct the sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ The investigators found a hair clip a bottle of nail polish, and a credit card belonging to the kidnapping victim. ⊗ She had a scholarship to ballet school but longed to be a doctor. ⊗ Since you cannot swim, you are not allowed on the boat nor near the docks.
Correlative Conjunction	
Definition	These are <i>pairs of coordinating conjunctions</i> ; these pairs must be used together . Like coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions <i>describe equal elements</i> .
Words used (limited list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • both...and, not only...but also (combining or addition) • either...or, whether...or not (binary choice) • neither...nor (negative)
Grammar rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first word of the conjunction must go directly before the first subject or clause; the second word of the conjunction must go directly before the second. • both...and can only be used with simple subjects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ However, not only...but also can be used with simple subjects and clauses
Example Sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper's results were both impressive and innovative. • I will not only grow the cells for the assay, but also interpret the results. • The daughter bought not only a designer purse, but also a custom wallet. • Harry will either go to the market or the mall this afternoon. • I neither want to clean my room nor desire to go caroling.
Quick Practice: correct the sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Jill neither wanted or needed singing bass novelty. ⊗ The child both ate an entire cake and drank a liter of soda; she soon vomited. ⊗ Mark wanted either Cheerios and Raisin Bran.
Subordinating Conjunction	
Definition	These linking words are often used to <i>expand or further describe the main clause/element</i> (the explanation clause is subordinate).
Words used (limited list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as, because, since (cause) • so, so that (purpose) • although, though (contrastive) • after, before, until, while (temporal) • if, unless, provided, whichever, whenever (conditional)
Grammar rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conjunction must go before the subordinating clause (the explanation clause) • Commas must go at the end of the first clause, which can be either the subordinating or main clause
Example Sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before going to the game (subordinate), we often eat at the pub (main). • Although very cute (sub), pandas are not suitable pets (main). • Candice was feeling lonely (main), so she adopted another cat (sub). • Peanut butter is delicious (main), provided you don't have a nut allergy (sub).

Quick Practice: correct the sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Mary was hungry while at the grocery store so she bought chips ice cream and an entire cake. ⊗ The cable TV is lagging, the internet is fast, though. ⊗ Because the island was beautiful, it had an infestation of coconut crabs.
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Types of connectors

We can think of connectors as functionally similar to coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, but the former connects complete sentences (instead of) nouns, clauses, etc. Because connectors often use different words than conjunctions, we need to be careful that we do not use a conjunction where a connector should be and vice versa. Below are some common connectors and their corresponding conjunction. If you often struggle with run-on sentences, try replacing the conjunction with the correct connector!

		Conjunction	Corresponding Connector
Grammar rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectors must go <i>between</i> the two statements which they connect. • Connectors can go before or after the subject of the second sentence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ex. Mount Kilimanjaro is on the Equator. <u>It</u>, however, has a covering of snow and ice. • A comma must follow a connector if it is the 1st word in the sentence. If it's not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the connector goes after the subject of the sentence but before the verb, use a comma before and after the connector (see above). • Connectors can sometimes go after the subject and verb of the sentence, but they follow different grammar rules (not discussed). Usually, though, these connectors do not require commas. 	and	also, in addition, additionally, moreover, furthermore
		but	however, even so, though, nevertheless, nonetheless, still, yet, in contrast, on the other hand, on the contrary
		so, because (cause-effect)	therefore, thus, consequently, hence, for this reason, as a result, that is why
		so (similarity)	similarly, likewise
Example Sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A ghost named Casper haunted the house. It, <i>though</i>, was not friendly. • We had to get to the beach early. <i>Otherwise</i>, we have missed the sunrise. • The windows were very old. <i>Consequently</i>, the room was cold and drafty. • Steph loves ice cream. Her sister, <i>likewise</i>, adores gelato. 	before	beforehand, before this, first, then, next, afterwards
		or	alternatively, otherwise
		while (same time)	meanwhile, at the same time/moment
Quick Practice: correct the sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Meanwhile, Timmy had fallen in the well. Lassie was at the vet. ⊗ The meadow seemed bucolic and innocuous. The people of the village nonetheless knew its dark secret. ⊗ PETA loves saving animals. They love shocking the public, also. 		

When to use conjunction vs. connector

Two main considerations should be taken into account:

1. When conjunctions are used, this implies that the statement after the conjunction is relaying knowledge already known to the reader. Connectors are used when the information is presented in the preceding sentences and is not assumed knowledge.

<i>If</i> it snows tomorrow, the city will send the plows.	It may snow tomorrow. <i>If so</i> , the city will send the plows.
In the left example, the statement that follows the conjunction implies that the reader already knows that there is a chance of snow. The example on the right must state first that it may snow and then the connector describes the effect of the snow.	

2. Joining the statement with a conjunction implies that they are part of the same idea. By using a connector, the separation between two statements allows their relationship to be more precisely defined, which is especially important for professional writing.

Cars can be dangerous <i>and</i> they pollute.	Cars can be dangerous. <i>Moreover</i> , they pollute.
The left sentence is structured so that “dangerous” and “pollute” are two equal points that emphasize one broader message: cars are bad. The example on the right is structured to make two separate points, and “moreover” indicates that “pollute” is more important.	

Practice

Re-write the sentence with the appropriate punctuation and linking word. (There are multiple correct answers)

3. She is afraid of dogs | She was bitten by her neighbors' Chihuahua as a child

4. Tsunamis are highly destructive events | They are rare and often unpredictable

5. Chickens have wings | They cannot fly

1. Penny did not pass the class | She never did her homework

2. The Mayans were one of the most academically advanced cultures in pre-Colombian North America | The cause for the collapse of their civilization is still unknown

Sources and Further Reading/Practice:

Grammar and Vocabulary in Academic & Professional English. “Conjunctions versus connectors.”
<https://guinlist.wordpress.com/2012/11/26/40-conjunctions-versus-connectors/>
Linguapress. “Conjunctions, coordination and subordination.”
<http://linguapress.com/grammar/conjunctions.htm>
Agenda Web. “Conjunctions Exercises.” <http://www.agendaweb.org/grammar/conjunctions.html>