

Conjunctions

Introduction to Conjunctions

Conjunctions are the **words or phrases that join other words, other phrases, clauses or sentences**. These words or phrases act as connectors or bridges.

Conjunctions can be broadly classified as **coordinating, subordinating** and **correlative**.

Coordinating Conjunctions

These conjunctions **join words, phrases or sentences of equal importance**.

For example:

Joseph reached the station on time, **but** the train was late.

Here, 'but' is the coordinating conjunction connecting 'Joseph reached the station on time' with 'the train was late'. The sentence can be broken up into two separate sentences as follows:

Joseph reached the station on time.

The train was late.

Both these sentences convey separate meanings individually. Neither depends on the other to convey its meaning. Hence, it can be said that they are sentences of equal rank or importance.

Take another example:

I want to drink pineapple juice **and** orange juice.

Here, 'and' connects 'pineapple juice' with 'orange juice'. Here, both 'pineapple juice' and 'orange juice' have the same importance. Breaking down this sentence, one can very well write as follows:

I want to drink pineapple juice.

I want to drink orange juice.

Hence, we can say that a **coordinating conjunction** is used in a sentence when the **grammatical units** (i.e., words, phrases, sentences) **which are joined by the conjunction are given the same importance or emphasis in the sentence.**

Coordinating Conjunctions – FANBOYS

There are seven basic coordinating conjunctions—**For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So.**

FOR

Sethu must have been sick, **for** he was looking very pale.

Here, 'for' joins 'Sethu must have been sick' with 'he was looking very pale'. Both the joined parts have the same importance.

This conjunction expresses inference. It shows the reasoning involved ('he was looking pale') in drawing the conclusion ('Sethu must have been sick').

AND

The jewel thief was hiding in the basement, **and** the police was looking for him on the ground floor.

Here, 'and' joins 'the jewel thief was hiding in the basement' with 'the police was looking for him on the ground floor'. Both the joined parts have the same importance.

This conjunction expresses addition. It merely adds one statement ('the police was looking for him on the ground floor') to another ('the jewel thief was hiding in the basement').

At the circus, I saw a lion, a python, a hippopotamus, a giraffe **and** a chimpanzee.

Here, 'and' joins all the items in the series (lion, python, hippopotamus, giraffe, chimpanzee). Each item has the same importance as the others.

Once again, the conjunction expresses addition. It adds together all the animals seen by the speaker at the circus.

NOR

Honey does not want to go to school, **nor** does he wish to study at home.

Here, 'nor' joins 'Honey does not want to go to school' with 'does he wish to study at home'. Both the joined parts are given the same emphasis in the sentence, i.e., they are of equal importance.

This conjunction joins two negative alternatives—*does not want to go to school* and *does not wish to study at home*.

BUT

The bowlers managed to beat the batsmen many times, **but** they could not take a wicket.

Here, 'but' joins 'the bowlers managed to beat the batsmen many times' with 'they could not take a wicket'. Both the joined parts have equal importance.

In this case, the idea that follows the conjunction (*failing to take a wicket*) serves to show its contrast to the idea that comes before the conjunction (*beating the batsmen*).

He is experienced **but** out of form.

Here, 'but' joins 'experienced' with 'out of form'. Both the joined parts are given the same emphasis in the sentence, i.e., they are of equal importance.

Once again, this conjunction joins two opposing ideas—*experience* and *lack of form*.

OR

I could do this work by myself, **or** we could do it together.

Here, 'or' joins 'I could do this work by myself' with 'we could do it together'. Both the joined parts have equal importance.

This conjunction joins two alternatives—*doing the work alone* and *doing the work together*.

Use a fork **or** a spoon, but do not use your hands.

Here, 'or' joins 'a fork' with 'a spoon'. Both the joined parts are given the same emphasis in the sentence, i.e., they are of equal importance.

Once again, the conjunction represents a choice—between the *fork* and the *spoon*.

YET

The two actors are fierce rivals, **yet** they respect each other's work.

Here, 'yet' joins 'the two actors are fierce rivals' with 'they respect each other's work'. Both the joined parts have the same importance.

In this case, the idea that follows the conjunction (*respect for each other's work*) serves to show its contrast to the idea that comes before the conjunction (*fierce rivalry*).

Note:

This conjunction is similar to 'but'. They can be used interchangeably when the part following the conjunction is of an unexpected or a surprising nature.

However, when the part following the conjunction is not of a surprising nature, it is always safe to use 'but'.

For example:

I would like to go for the wedding, **but** I have important work to complete.

They would like to play the game, **but** they have to sit on the bench today.

Let us replace 'but' with 'yet' in these sentences.

I would like to go for the wedding, **yet** I have important work to complete.

They would like to play the game, **yet** they have to sit on the bench today.

These sentences do not make the same sense as the previous two sentences. **Hence, whenever in doubt, use 'but' instead of 'yet'.**

SO

The boys were making a lot of noise, **so** the teacher had to punish them.

Here, 'so' joins 'the boys were making a lot of noise' with 'the teacher had to punish them'. Both the joined parts have the same importance.

In this case, the idea that follows the conjunction (*punishment*) shows that it is the result of the idea that comes before the conjunction (*making a lot of noise*).

Subordinating Conjunctions

These conjunctions **join a subordinate clause with a main clause**. Simply speaking, a subordinate or dependent clause is one that cannot stand as a separate sentence, while a main or an independent clause is one that can stand as a separate sentence.

For example:

Gagan decided that he would walk to office **if** it did not rain that morning.

In this case, the main and the subordinate clauses are as follows:

Gagan decided that he would walk to office. (**Main Clause**)

The meaning is clear. Hence, this clause stands by itself as a sentence.

If it did not rain that morning (**Subordinate Clause**)

The meaning is not clear. Hence, this clause does not stand by itself as a sentence. It depends on the main clause for its meaning to become clear.

'If' is **the subordinating conjunction** that **begins the subordinate clause**. So, two things become clear immediately:

(a) The subordinating conjunction joins the subordinate clause with the main clause.

(b) The subordinating conjunction begins the subordinating clause.

A subordinating conjunction has two roles. These are as follows:

(i) **It shows a relationship between the ideas contained in the joined clauses.**

Using the same example:

Gagan decided that he would walk to office **if** it did not rain that morning.

Here, 'if' shows the relation of condition. Gagan would walk to office on the condition that it did not rain. However, if it did rain, then Gagan would not walk to office.

(ii) **It reduces the importance of the idea contained in the subordinating clause and increases the importance of the idea contained in the main clause.**

Again using the same example:

Gagan decided that he would walk to office **if** it did not rain that morning.

Here, 'if' clearly indicates that the main idea is Gagan's decision to walk to office.

Subordinating Conjunctions of Time and Place

Subordinating Conjunctions of Time

The crowd went mad **after** the fall of Sachin's wicket.

Main Clause: The crowd went mad.

Subordinate Clause: After the fall of Sachin's wicket

Priti had seen the movie **before** it was seen by Raji.

Main Clause: Priti had seen the movie.

Subordinate Clause: Before it was seen by Raji

He has told me to wait **till** he comes back.

Main Clause: He has told me to wait.

Subordinate Clause: Till he comes back

I cannot predict the outcome of the game **until** the first fifteen overs have ended.

Main Clause: I cannot predict the outcome of the game.

Subordinate Clause: Until the first fifteen overs have ended

They were climbing the mountain **as** the snow was falling.

Main Clause: They were climbing the mountain.

Subordinate Clause: As the snow was falling

While they were discussing the movie, their teacher entered the class.

Main Clause: Their teacher entered the class.

Subordinate Clause: While they were discussing the movie

Some children danced **while** others sat and watched.

Main Clause: Some children danced.

Subordinate Clause: While others sat and watched

The guard opened the door **when** the thieves were opening the safe.

Main Clause: The guard opened the door.

Subordinate Clause: When the thieves were opening the safe

When I hit the ball, the ball stays hit.

Main Clause: The ball stays hit.

Subordinate Clause: When I hit the ball

You can come to my house **whenever** you like.

Main Clause: You can come to my house.

Subordinate Clause: Whenever you like

Whenever you tell a lie, the crow crows thrice.

Main Clause: The crow crows thrice.

Subordinate Clause: Whenever you tell a lie

Subordinating Conjunctions of Place

You can go **wherever** you wish to go.

Main Clause: You can go.

Subordinate Clause: Wherever you wish to go

I will show you the place **where** you will meet him.

Main Clause: I will show you the place.

Subordinate Clause: Where you will meet him

Subordinating Conjunctions of Reason, Purpose, Result and Condition

Subordinating Conjunctions of Reason or Cause

Jagjit did not laugh at the joke **because** he failed to understand it.

Main Clause: Jagjit did not laugh at the joke.

Subordinate Clause: Because he failed to understand it

As Manu did not eat green vegetables, his haemoglobin count was very less.

Main Clause: His haemoglobin count was very less.

Subordinate Clause: As Manu did not eat green vegetables

Since your cousins are coming only for a day, you may take a leave from school.

Main Clause: You may take a leave from school.

Subordinate Clause: Since your cousins are coming only for a day

It is difficult to say **why** the team performed as they did.

Main Clause: It is difficult to say.

Subordinate Clause: Why the team performed as they did

Subordinating Conjunction of Purpose

The knights are fighting **so that** one of them can win the box of gold coins.

Main Clause: The knights are fighting.

Subordinate Clause: So that one of them can win the box of gold coins

Subordinating Conjunction of Result

We laughed so hard **that** our eyes and nose started leaking.

Main Clause: We laughed so hard.

Subordinate Clause: That our eyes and nose started leaking

Subordinating Conjunctions of Condition

The children will not go to school **if** you don't get new schoolbags for them.

Main Clause: The children will not go to school.

Subordinate Clause: If you don't get new schoolbags for them

The match will end in a draw **only if** it rains.

Main Clause: The match will end in a draw.

Subordinate Clause: Only if it rains

I will buy a guitar **once** I get my pocket money for this month.

Main Clause: I will buy a guitar.

Subordinate Clause: Once I get my pocket money for this month

As long as Sehwag is playing, South Africa cannot hope to win this match.

Main Clause: South Africa cannot hope to win this match.

Subordinate Clause: As long as Sehwag is playing

You cannot hope to win the gold medal **unless** you practise regularly.

Main Clause: You cannot hope to win the gold medal.

Subordinate Clause: Unless you practise regularly

Subordinating Conjunctions of Comparison, Contrast and Uncertainty *Subordinating Conjunctions of Comparison*

John is taller **than** Dino.

Main Clause: John is taller.

Subordinate Clause: Than Dino (is)

He was playing **as if** it were the last match he would ever play.

Main Clause: He was playing.

Subordinate Clause: As if it were the last match he would ever play

They were running away from the house **as though** they had seen a ghost.

Main Clause: They were running away from the house.

Subordinate Clause: As though they had seen a ghost

Subordinating Conjunctions of Contrast

Although I am not a big cricket fan, I rarely left my seat during the final yesterday.

Main Clause: I rarely left my seat during the final yesterday.

Subordinate Clause: Although I am not a big cricket fan

Though he is studying for the English exam, his focus is on the Math paper that follows.

Main Clause: His focus is on the Math paper that follows.

Subordinate Clause: Though he is studying for the English exam

I would like to try again **even though** I have failed five times before.

Main Clause: I would like to try again.

Subordinate Clause: Even though I have failed five times before

He will not eat spinach **even if** you dip it in honey.

Main Clause: He will not eat spinach.

Subordinate Clause: Even if you dip it in honey

Rishi plays the guitar **whereas** Ranbir plays the piano.

Main Clause: Rishi plays the guitar.

Subordinate Clause: Whereas Ranbir plays the piano

You should focus on the real issue **rather than** beat around the bush.

Main Clause: You should focus on the real issue.

Subordinate Clause: Rather than beat around the bush

Subordinating Conjunctions of Uncertainty or Doubt

I don't know **whether** this is the right way to approach the problem.

Main Clause: I don't know.

Subordinate Clause: Whether this is the right way to approach the problem

I cannot say **if** it has stopped raining.

Main Clause: I cannot say.

Subordinate Clause: If it has stopped raining

Correlative Conjunctions

These conjunctions **are used in pairs**. They are used for connecting two grammatical units of equal importance. Hence, **they perform the same role as that performed by coordinating conjunctions**.

For example:

Either you eat the cake **or** let me have it.

In this case, 'you eat the cake' and 'let me have it' have the same importance.

Let us look at some common correlative conjunctions.

Either—or

As a birthday gift you may have **either** a puppy **or** a parrot.

Neither—nor

Tarun wanted **neither** the chocolate **nor** the apple pie.

Both—and

Both my uncle **and** my aunt have won medals at the Olympics.

As many—as

There were **as many** boys **as** there were girls.

As—as

My understanding of relativity is **as** good **as** yours.

Not only—but also

Aamir **not only** acted in the movie **but also** directed it.

Whether—or

It will not matter **whether** you play according to the rules **or** not.

Hardly—when

Hardly had he begun studying **when** his friends came into his room.

If—then

If they had played as a team, **then** they would have surely won the match.

Transition Words/Phrases

There are some words and phrases that perform a similar role to that performed by conjunctions. The term used for these words or phrases is ‘transition words or phrases’ or ‘conjunctive adverbs’. Transition words or phrases improve the connections, relations, transitions or shifts between sentences and paragraphs.

For example:

Anshuman will not be at home tomorrow. **However**, you can give the parcel to the watchman.

In this case, the transition word ‘however’ indicates the shift from the idea contained in the first sentence (*Anshuman* → *absent* → *not able to receive the parcel*) to its alternative in the second (*watchman* → *present* → *can receive the parcel on Anshuman’s behalf*).

Let us look at a few transition words and phrases.

Similarly

Man is not perfect. **Similarly**, religion—something created by man—is also imperfect.

Moreover

Rote learning is the bane of our educational system. **Moreover**, it hampers a child's desire to learn.

In particular

I like most of the songs composed by Rahman. **In particular**, I like his version of *Vande Matram*.

However

They left for the station on time. **However**, the traffic on the way ensured that they reached the station fifteen minutes after the train had left.

On the other hand

Dinesh does not like fruits. **On the other hand**, Ramesh is simply mad about them.

As a result

I was late for office. **As a result**, I got a scolding from my boss.

Therefore

Girish is on leave today. **Therefore**, I will take the class on his behalf.

Consequently

Naina had to study for the engineering entrance exam. **Consequently**, she could not go for the wedding.

First, Second, Third, Finally, In conclusion

There are several points to be made against his favour. **First**, I think he is a lazy bum. **Second**, I believe he is a moron. **Third**, I feel he is insecure. **Finally**, I cannot but believe that he is neurosis personified. **In conclusion**, I can only say that even if he is made to sit under a 500 watt bulb, he cannot be termed as particularly bright.

Meanwhile

Harsh was working on the Math problems. **Meanwhile**, Adarsh was watching his favourite cartoons.

In fact

That is a fine restaurant. **In fact**, many famous personalities have given positive reviews on its world famous cuisine.

In other words

I will come late. **In other words**, I will have dinner outside.