

Conjunctions

WHAT IS A CONJUNCTION?

A conjunction is a word that is used to connect elements of a sentence, such as words, phrases, or clauses. There are three types of conjunctions: subordinating conjunctions, coordinating conjunctions, and correlative conjunctions.

Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions form sentences into word clusters called subordinate or dependent clauses, which serve as parts of sentences. Dependent clauses cannot stand alone and must be connected to independent clauses to form complex sentences.

Everyone was relieved *when* the final exam was over.

Here, “when” is the subordinating conjunction and “when the final exam was over” is the subordinate clause (for more information on subordinate clauses, please refer to the Independent/Dependent Clause page).

Some common subordinating conjunctions:

After	If only	Unless
Although	In order that	Until
As	Now that	When
As if	Once	Whenever
As long as	Provided	Where
As though	Rather than	Whereas
Because	Since	Wherever
Before	So that	Whether
Even if	That	While
Even though	Though	Within
If	Without	Besides

Here are some more examples of subordinating conjunctions:

After a long drive, it feels good to stretch your legs.
Everyone was excited *because* school was almost over for the year.
Shannon said *that* she knew the answer.
I like walking *because* it is good exercise and enjoyable.

Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions are single words that connect similar elements in a sentence (the same part of speech or structure), such as adjectives, nouns, or clauses. Coordinating conjunctions are:

and but or for yet so nor

Some examples:

- I have not traveled to Japan, China, *or* Australia.
Here, the coordinating conjunction “or” connects words of the same type, in this case nouns.
- After a double shift at work, I am tired, cranky, *and* sore.
Here, the coordinating conjunction “and” connects adjectives.
- I would love to go to New York with you tonight, *but* I have already made other plans.
Here, the coordinating conjunction “but” connects two independent clauses (sentences).

Correlative Conjunctions

Like coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions connect similar elements in a sentence (the same part of speech or structure), such as adjectives, nouns, and clauses. However, unlike coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions are combinations of coordinating conjunctions, not just a single word. Correlative conjunctions always work in pairs (see below) and link grammatically equivalent items. Some common correlative conjunctions are:

Both...and Not only...but also Not...but Either...or
Neither...nor Whether...or As...as

Some examples:

- To alleviate stress, you must *not only* recognize the stressors in your life *but also* find methods of coping with such stress.
- *Both* exercise *and* a healthy diet are vital to overall good health.
- Tonight we can *either* go out to dinner *or* call for take-out.
- I am *not* going to the movies tonight, *but* I can go tomorrow if you are interested.
- I’ll bet that *neither* of you completed your homework *nor* your chores.
- *Whether* you like Jack Nicholson *or* not, you must admit he is a great actor.
- *As* much *as* I would love to go skydiving, I am terrified of heights.