

ENGLISH

Grammar: Conjunctions



Conjunctions

What is a Conjunction?

Conjunctions are words used solely for connecting other words or phrases in a sentence. In the process, they often serve to compress the length of a sentence. They perform no other function what so ever.

Examples:

Complete the task **before** noon.

Seema collected flowers **and** leaves from the garden.

She will not reach in time **even if** she hires a cab.

Different for Other Parts of Speech

Conjunctions are similar in appearance to the other parts of speech like **Relative Pronouns**, **Relative Adverbs** and **Prepositions**. The function they perform is what sets them apart.

To better understand this distinction, let us take a closer look at the examples below.

Conjunction vs. Relative Pronoun

- Words when used as relative pronouns function as the subject of the dependent clause and not just a connector.
- Words when used as conjunctions have a distinct subject following them.

Example 1:

This is the house **which** I was planning to buy. (Relative Pronoun)

Sam did not know **which book** he had to carry. (Conjunction)

In the first sentence, 'which' refers to the noun 'house'; therefore, it is a relative pronoun.

In the second sentence, 'which' is used to connect two clauses; therefore, it is a conjunction.

Example 2:

The shop **that** I entered was deserted. (Relative Pronoun)

Rosy said **that her neighbour** stole her sweets. (Conjunction)

In the first sentence, 'that' refers to the noun 'shop', thus making it a relative pronoun.

In the second sentence, 'that' is used to connect two clauses; therefore, it is a conjunction.

Example 3:

The girl **who** left the letter looked distraught.

I did not know **who the man** at the door was.

In the first sentence, 'who' refers to the noun 'girl', thus making it a relative pronoun.

In the second sentence, 'who' is used to connect two clauses; therefore, it is a conjunction.

- The phrases '**book**', '**her neighbour**' and '**the man**' (highlighted in blue) are the subjects of the dependent clauses in those sentences.

Conjunction vs. Relative Adverbs

- Words when used as relative adverbs function as post-modifiers to the main verb in the sentence.
- When they are used as conjunctions, they merely serve to connect two phrases or clauses.

Example 1:

This photo is taken in the studio **where** I usually **practice**.

Fools rush in **where** angels fear to tread.

In the first sentence, 'where' modifies the verb 'practice', thus making it a relative adverb.

In the second sentence, 'where' connects two complete clauses; therefore, it is a conjunction.

Example 2:

The day **when** she finally **arrived** brought joy to the entire town.

James could not work **when** he was worried.

In the first sentence, 'when' modifies the verb 'arrived', thus making it a relative adverb.

In the second sentence, 'when' connects two complete clauses; therefore, it is a conjunction.

Example 3:

The reason **why** the letter **was returned** was unknown to all.

Anika wanted to know **why** she was not selected.

In the first sentence, 'why' modifies the verb 'was returned', thus making it a relative adverb.

In the second sentence, 'why' connects two complete clauses; therefore, it is a conjunction.

Types of Conjunctions

Conjunctions are broadly classified into three types:

- Coordinating conjunctions
- Subordinating conjunctions
- Correlative conjunctions

I. Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions are used to connect words, phrases and clauses of equal rank or importance.

These include

For	And	Nor
But	Or	Yet
So	Either	Neither

Let us look at some examples which use the above coordinating conjunctions.

Examples:

- FOR Mohan did not enter the class **for** he was late.
- AND Raj came home from school **and** switched on the television.
- NOR She did not visit me **nor** did she call when I was ill.
- BUT She worked very hard **but** failed to produce results.
- OR Would you like some tea **or** a soft drink?
- YET Mom said she could not make it, **yet** she was there on time.
- SO I wanted some peace of mind, **so** I visited Kerala.
- EITHER **Either** we catch this train or remain stranded here for another two days.
- NEITHER **Neither** Raj nor Raman knew where the sound came from.

NOTE:

- All coordinating conjunctions except for 'nor' and 'or' can be omitted from a sentence and replaced with a comma (,) a semi-colon (;) or a colon (:).

Examples:

She watches me **but** does not speak.

She watches me; she does not speak.

Mike saw the glass of milk **and** ran out.

Mike saw the glass of milk, he ran out.

- Types of Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions can be further classified into four types based on the functions they perform. These are

- **Cumulative conjunction** – And – Used to sum up or add elements mentioned in a sentence.
Examples: Fruits and flowers, books and pens
- **Adversative conjunction** – But, Yet – Used to highlight opposites or contrast between seemingly similar elements in a sentence.
Examples: Young but bold, quick yet late
- **Disjunctive/Alternative conjunction** – Or, Nor, Neither – Used to highlight a choice within the sentence.
Examples: Tea or coffee, neither good nor bad
- **Illative conjunction** – For – Used to highlight an inference drawn in the sentence.
Example: Sandhya cried for she lost her doll.

II. Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions are used to connect a main clause to a dependent or subordinate clause. The use of the subordinating conjunction helps the dependent clause connect to and derive meaning from the main clause.

There is a wide range of words which are included in this category. A few commonly used subordinating conjunctions are listed below:

After	Although	As	Because
Before	If	Since	Than
That	Though	Till	Unless
Until	When	Whenever	Where
Whereas	Wherever	Whether	While

Let us look at some examples which use the above subordinating conjunctions.

Examples:

AFTER **Kavita entered the auditorium after** filling the enrolment form.

ALTHOUGH	Although the hotel is grand, it is not good enough for the royal family.
AS	As we all know, our school has received an award.
BECAUSE	I achieved my goals because you trained me.
BEFORE	Visit the doctor before the illness gets worse.
IF	If I stick around any longer, I will go crazy.
SINCE	Since the matter is grave, I advise you to inform the police.
THAN	She is a more dedicated worker than most others in the office.
THAT	It is a misconception that dental treatment is painful.
THOUGH	Though he was new to the place, he wanted to lead the party.
TILL	They didn't quit till they lost their last penny.
UNLESS	Mr McArthur will purchase the estate unless his wife disapproves of it.
UNTIL	She did not give up until she achieved the first rank.
WHEN	Tom will come home when his wife and his mother agree with each other.
WHENEVER	The child cries whenever he is bathed.
WHERE	He prefers to work where there is no noise.
WHEREAS	Seema loved to read books, whereas her sister loved to dance.
WHEREVER	Jyoti was known for spreading smiles wherever she went.
WHETHER	The cops could not figure out whether the evidence was true or false.
WHILE	While mom was busy cooking, little Tom sneaked out into the garden.

Observe that the clauses in red are the main clauses in the sentences and the ones in black are the subordinate clauses. These subordinate clauses derive their meaning through the support of the subordinating conjunctions which connect them to the main clauses.

III. Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions are words used in pairs and whose main function is to establish a relation. Each conjunction in these pairs is immediately followed by the phrases being connected or compared by them.

These include

Either ... or	Neither ... nor	Both ... and
Though ... yet	Whether ... or	Not only ... but also

Examples:

EITHER ... OR	You can have either the ice cream or the candy.
NEITHER ... NOR	Neither Mary nor Martha dared to disobey their father.
BOTH ... AND	Both Mom and dad bought gifts to celebrate my sister's birthday.

THOUGH ... YET **Though** you acted rudely, **yet** I will forgive you.
 WHETHER ... OR **Whether** she decides to come **or** she sends her sister is her decision.
 NOT ONLY ... BUT ALSO Tom **not only** cut the grass **but also** watered the flower pots.

- Compound Conjunctions

Compound conjunctions are phrases used as conjunctions in a sentence. They can function as either coordinating or subordinating conjunctions.

In order that	Even if	Provided that	Inasmuch as	As soon as
On condition that	So that	As though	As well as	As if

IN ORDER THAT He cross checked all the preparations **in order that** he may not miss any details.
 EVEN IF **Even if** I work all day, I will not be able to finish the project in time.
 PROVIDED THAT The results will be declared on Monday **provided that** they are updated on the site by the weekend.
 AS SOON AS I will call you **as soon as** I get some lead on the case.
 SO THAT I took a one-week break **so that** I could attend my cousin's wedding.
 AS THOUGH She looked pale **as though** she had just seen a ghost.
 AS WELL AS I met my cousin **as well as** went to Shaniwar Wada when in Pune.
 AS IF She was chatting with me **as if** she knew me from many years.