

Conjunctions have the function of joining words, phrases or clauses in a sentence. There are different kinds of conjunctions.

Co-ordinating conjunctions

Co-ordinating conjunctions join two elements of equal importance.

Jack *and* Jill

You can wash the car *or* the windows.

When only co-ordinating conjunctions are used in a sentence to join two or more clauses, a **compound sentence** (also called a **co-ordinate sentence**) is formed:

I went for the shopping *but* Asif cooked the dinner.

Many people say that co-ordinating conjunctions should not come at the start of sentence. Therefore it is best to avoid doing this, although you may see it done for effect:

You are silly. *But* I like you.

Subordinating conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions join two clauses so that one becomes the **main clause** (which carries the main meaning of the sentence), and one becomes a **subordinate clause** (which gives additional information).



When subordinating conjunctions are used in a sentence to join two or more of its clauses, a **complex sentence** is formed:

I am going to bed *because* I am tired.

Subordinating conjunctions can come at the start of a sentence:

Although she was worried about his teeth, Mum gave Bernard money for sweets.

Correlative conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions always work in pairs.

both . . . and is used to link two things.

I play *both* football *and* tennis.

not only . . . but also is a more emphatic way to link two things.

I play *not only* football *but also* tennis.

whether . . . or is used to link alternatives.

They can't decide *whether* to play football *or* tennis.

either . . . or is also used to link alternatives.

We play *either* football *or* tennis.

neither . . . nor is used to link negative alternatives.

He can play *neither* football *nor* tennis.

➤ *See also* **Language Workshop** panel on **Sentence types**.