

Conjunctions and paired conjunctions

Introduction



As I have a lot of work to do before the summer holidays, I don't have time to attend the seminar and **neither** do my colleagues.

Definition

These words have different meanings and uses but they can all be used as **conjunctions**.

Uses

Conjunction	Use	Examples
as, since, for	To mean 'because'	<p>We decided to work late as we're so busy at the moment.</p> <p>I'll go to the seminar as well since you're going.</p> <p>She was very excited, for this was the first day of her holiday. [see note below]</p>
yet	To mean 'but' - often to emphasise something that's surprising	I was really tired, yet I managed to stay awake until the end of the film.
nor, neither	To connect two negative ideas	I'm not happy about it and neither/nor is Sébastien.

so	To connect two positive ideas [See 'so' in and, but, or, so, because rule]	I'm very happy about it and so is Sébastien.
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Since, as, for

Note that

1. **Since** and **as** have the same meaning as **because** but they are used in slightly different ways. **Because** is used when a reason is a more important or necessary part of a sentence in order to answer the question 'why?' The 'because' clause usually comes second:

I chose to live in the south of England **because** I wanted to be near my parents.

With **since** and **as**, the reason is more evident, less important or already known. The **since** or **as** clause is more likely to be placed at the beginning of a sentence:

As we're so busy at the moment, we've decided to work late this week.

Since it's such a nice day, shall we go out?

2. **For** is much less common in conversation - it is considered old-fashioned - but we find it in literature:

He felt ashamed, **for** he knew it was all his fault.

Yet

Note that

1. In everyday conversation, we are more likely to use common words and expressions with a similar meaning such as '**but**'.
2. We sometimes use **yet** in short phrases with two adjectives:

This device is simple **yet** effective.

Our boss is strict **yet** fair.

Neither, nor, so

Note that these are also often used as responses to say that a situation is the same as that of another person. Here are some examples:

'to be'	Auxiliary verbs	Other verbs
"I'm hungry." "So am I." ["Me too."]	"Carine should be on the team." "So should Armelle."	"I love chocolate." "So do I." ["Me too."]
"Philippe was late." "So was Bertrand."	"I've read this book." "So have I." ["Me too."]	"David went to the exhibition." "So did Keira."
"I'm not sure." "Neither/nor am I." ["Me neither."/"Nor me."]	"I can't help her with that." "Neither/nor can I." ["Me neither."/"Nor me."]	"He doesn't want to go out to lunch." "Neither/nor do we."
"I wasn't working on that project last year." "Neither/nor was I." ["Me neither."/"Nor me."]	"This computer mustn't be used today." "Neither/nor must this one."	"I don't understand this." "Neither/nor do I." ["Me neither."/"Nor me."]

Note that we can say "Me too" when agreeing with a positive statement. We can also say "Me neither" or "Nor me" when agreeing with a negative statement.

Examples



As we all have other work to do, let's stop now and carry on tomorrow.



Since I live in a city, I'm used to a lot of traffic and noise.



He was nervous **yet** excited.



I'm afraid there's no more pork. **Neither** do we have fish on the menu today.



Arnaud made a speech at the wedding and **so** did his father.

Paired conjunctions



This meal is **not only** tasty **but also** nutritious.

We use them to connect two ideas including nouns, verbs, adjectives or phrases.

Examples:

I invited	both	Brenda	and	Angela	to the seminar.
	Both	Brenda	and	Angela	are going to the seminar.
It's available in	either	red	or	blue.	
I don't know	whether	to fix it	or	buy a new one.	

Conjunctions	Use	Examples
both...and	To emphasise that there are two things	Both a knowledge of languages and IT skills are necessary for this job. I like both red and white wine - I don't have a preference.

either...or	<p>To talk about a possible consequence</p> <p>To talk about two alternatives or possibilities.</p>	<p>Either we make a decision today or we risk losing the contract.</p> <p>We can have the meeting either tomorrow or Friday.</p>
neither...nor	<p>To emphasise two things in a negative sentence</p>	<p>I like neither tea nor coffee - I prefer cold drinks.</p> <p>Neither my brother nor my sister live in England - they both moved to the US after university.</p>
not...but	<p>To emphasise a contrast between two things - sometimes in order to make a correction</p> <p>Note that this structure is most often used with the verb 'to be'</p>	<p>It wasn't Anne who wanted to speak to you but Jodi.</p> <p>It isn't blue pens that we need but red.</p>
not only...but also	<p>To emphasise that there are two things - it can express surprise or annoyance</p>	<p>Not only is he good-looking but he can also cook!</p> <p>It's not only cheap but also practical.</p>
whether...or	<p>To talk about two alternatives</p> <p>Note that these two words can be placed separately or together</p>	<p>He isn't sure whether it's better to fly or go by train.</p> <p>Whether or not you agree, we're going to sign the contract.</p>

Subject-verb agreement

With **either...or** and **neither...nor**, the choice of verb depends on whether the first or second person or thing mentioned is singular or plural.

<p>When the second noun is singular, a singular verb is preferred but plural verbs are acceptable in conversation.</p>	<p>Either the sales manager or the director is going to attend the conference.</p>
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When the second noun is plural, use a plural verb.	Neither the director nor the sales managers <u>are</u> going to attend the conference.
When the second noun is singular but the first is plural, you can use a singular or plural verb.	Either the sales managers or the director <u>is/are</u> going to attend the conference.

Note that when **either** is not at the beginning of a sentence or clause, we can omit it:

It's available in (**either**) red **or** blue.

We can have the meeting (**either**) tomorrow **or** Friday.

Not only...but also

Note that

1. We can separate **but** and **also** - they don't have to be together in the sentence:

She's **not only** creative **but also** good at solving problems.

Or

She's **not only** creative **but** she's **also** good at solving problems.

2. We often invert the **not only** clause:

Not only is she creative **but** she's **also** good at solving problems.

3. We can use 'too' or 'as well' instead of **also**. These are placed at the end of a sentence:

She's **not only** creative **but** good at solving problems too/as well.

'Whether' has a similar meaning to 'if' and can sometimes be used as an alternative to 'if' when we talk about two possibilities:

I'm wondering if/**whether** we should tell him (**or** not).

It depends if/**whether** he'll be unhappy about it (**or** not).

I don't know if/**whether** recruiting more staff is a good idea **or** not.

He can't remember if/**whether** Aurélie **or** Olivier is in charge of the account.

Whether is preferred to 'if':

- a) before an infinitive:

I don't know **whether to do this now or later.** ✓
 I don't know if to do this now or later. ✗

Have you decided **whether or not to apply for the job?** ✓
 Have you decided if to apply for this job? ✗

b) after prepositions such as 'about' or expressions with a similar meaning:

There was a lot of disagreement **about whether** we should re-locate **or not.**
 It was **a question of whether (or not)** to choose the cheapest contractor.

c) at the beginning of a sentence:

Whether we eat in **or** go to a restaurant doesn't matter to me - you can choose.

d) directly before 'or not':

Have you decided **whether or not** you're coming with us?
 Have you decided **if/whether** you're coming with us **or not?**

Examples



We've got **both** meat **and** veggie burgers - which would you like?



We can **either** carry on for an hour **or** stop now and have lunch.



This job is **neither** challenging **nor** fun.



Not just one **but** all four of the children raised their hands.



We're **not only** going to the mountains **but also** the sea.



I don't know **whether** to have chocolate **or** vanilla.



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