

Conjunctions, linking words and expressions

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 and expressions have different meanings and uses but they can all be used as conjunctions.

Construction

These are usually placed at the beginning of a sentence or in the middle of a sentence to introduce a clause. For example:

In order to increase productivity, we're opening a new plant.
We're opening a new plant **in order to** increase productivity.

Instead of employing more people, we should work longer hours for a few weeks.
We should work longer hours for a few weeks **instead of** employing more people.

Depending on the expression, it can be followed by, for example, a noun or gerund, a bare infinitive or a subject and verb.

Uses

Here are some examples:

Conjunction	Use	Examples
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as, since, for	To mean 'because'	We decided to work late as we're so busy at the moment. I'll go to the seminar as well since you're going. She was very excited, for this was the first day of her holiday. [see note below]
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.
thanks to owing to due to	To mean 'because of'	Thanks to all your hard work, we won the contract. All flights have been cancelled, owing to adverse weather conditions. Due to the delay with the parts, we can't complete the order.
instead of rather than	To talk about alternatives	Can we have the meeting on Thursday instead of Tuesday? Instead of waiting until next month as planned, I think we should do it as soon as possible. I think we should do it as soon as possible rather than wait until next month as planned.

despite in spite of	To mean 'not affected, influenced or prevented by'	I managed to get there on time, despite the traffic. In spite of all the warnings, he went into the dangerous part of the town.
although	To mean 'but' or 'despite'	Although I had some doubts, I decided to apply for the job. I've booked a city centre hotel for the conference, although I'm not sure it's the best place.
even though	To mean 'although' Note that it is a little more emphatic - there is a bigger contrast between two ideas	Even though it was raining, we decided to play tennis. He's been very successful in the job, even though he didn't have much previous experience.
even if	To indicate that a situation or result is the same - no matter what	Even if my boss offers me more money, I'm still going to look for another job - I really don't want to work for her any more. I'll never be able to speak Japanese fluently, even if I live to be 100!
albeit	To mean 'although'	He's a good person to work for, albeit a bit strict. We're making some progress, albeit rather slowly. evening was very pleasant , albeit a little quiet . He tried , albeit without success . The evening was very pleasant , albeit a little quiet . He tried , albeit without success .
in order to with a view to so that Note that 'with a view to' is quite formal	To mean 'with the aim or purpose of doing something'	In order to clarify the situation, the manager's going to talk to us all tomorrow. We're taking on more staff with a view to relieving the pressure on existing employees. I've asked Bill to come to the meeting so that he can explain the new strategy.

when once as soon as now (that) before/after	As time markers	<p>When you see her, please ask her to call me.</p> <p>I'll help you once I've finished.</p> <p>Can you send her up as soon as she arrives?</p> <p>Now that everyone's here, let's begin.</p> <p>Do we need to finish this before we go home?</p> <p>After we've all had lunch, let's look at this again.</p>
whenever	To mean 'at whatever time - it doesn't matter when' or 'every time'	<p>Call me whenever you want to - I'll be happy to help.</p> <p>Whenever we go to Lyon, we always stay in the same hotel.</p>
in the event of	To mean 'if something happens'	<p>In the event of a fire, use the stairs and not the lift.</p> <p>I have to take over in the event of the manager's absence.</p>
(just) in case	When talking about what we do if something happens Note that we sometimes add 'just' when we doubt that something will be required	<p>In case you change your mind, here's my phone number.</p> <p>It's sunny now but I'll take an umbrella just in case it rains.</p>
lest	Related to the possibility of something negative happening Note that this is a formal word.	<p>They decided not to make a complaint, lest they lose the contract.</p> <p>I'm worried about how to tell them, lest they misunderstand.</p>

provided (that) providing	To mean 'if' or 'on condition that'	Provided that you fulfil all the criteria, you'll be shortlisted for the job. We can have the barbecue on Sunday, providing it doesn't rain.
assuming	To indicate a premise on which a statement can be made	Assuming we continue to be successful in Asia, how many new people do you think we'll need to recruit?
unless	To mean 'if + not'	Unless you hear from me, I'll see you next week as planned. [if you don't hear from me] We can have the barbecue on Sunday, unless it rains. [if it doesn't rain]

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

Thanks to, owing to, due to

Owing to and **due to** are more formal and less conversational than 'because of'.

Thanks to is used to talk about the reason for a positive result:

I've learned a lot in this job, **thanks to** my colleagues.
I'm better at speaking English now, **thanks to** spending so much time in London.

It is often used with 'it' + 'be':

It's **thanks to** you and your support that I got this job.

Or in a sarcastic way to blame someone or something:

We missed the train **thanks to** your driving!
Thanks to the weather, we had to postpone the barbecue again!

'Once' or 'when'?

Sometimes, **once** is used in the same way as **when**:

I'll help you **once/when** I've finished.

Once/when the contract was signed, we had to employ three more specialists.

But it is not interchangeable with **when** - we only use **once** when there is a suggestion of **as soon as** or 'from a certain moment'.

I was happy **when** I was young.

I was happy **once** I was young.

When

'When' has some other, more specific uses:

Use	Examples
To mean 'just at that moment' - there is a suggestion of suddenness	I was just getting ready to leave the office when the phone rang.
To mean 'considering that'	There's no point writing a letter when it's so much quicker to email.
To mean 'whereas'	I've got to work late tonight to finish this when I had plenty of time to do it last week.

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.**



The meeting went on for four hours, **thanks to Julia and all her questions!**



Once I'd found somewhere to live in the city, I was able to start looking for a job.



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Examples



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Connectors



The situation is very serious. The client is putting us under pressure to finish sooner than agreed. **Furthermore**, the project is already over budget.

These connectors form a link between ideas in two sentences:

We did extremely well last year. **However**, there is still a lot of work to be done.

They are different from conjunctions which link two parts of one sentence:

We did extremely well last year **but** there's still a lot of work to be done.

They are usually placed at the beginning of a sentence followed by a comma but they can also go in the middle or at the end of the second sentence.

We did extremely well last year. There is, however, still a lot of work to be done.
We did extremely well last year. There is still a lot of work to be done, however.

In this way, the connector is like a non-defining relative clause - if we remove it, the sentence still has a clear meaning.

For these reasons, the following structures are incorrect:

We did extremely well last year however there is still a lot of work to be done. 
We did extremely well last year, however there is still a lot of work to be done.



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