

# Paired conjunctions

## Introduction



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

## Definition

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

## Construction

We use them to connect two ideas including nouns, verbs, adjectives or phrases. Here are some examples:

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

# Uses

Conjunctions<?xml:namespace prefix = "o" ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />	Use	Examples
both...and	<b>To emphasise that there are two things</b>	<b>Both</b> a knowledge of languages <b>and</b> IT skills are necessary for this job.  I like <b>both</b> red <b>and</b> white wine - I don't have a preference.
either...or	<b>To talk about a possible consequence</b>  <b>To talk about two alternatives or possibilities.</b>	<b>Either</b> we make a decision today <b>or</b> we risk losing the contract.  We can have the meeting <b>either</b> tomorrow <b>or</b> Friday.
neither...nor	<b>To emphasise two things in a negative sentence</b>	I like <b>neither</b> tea <b>nor</b> coffee - I prefer cold drinks.  <b>Neither</b> my brother <b>nor</b> my sister live in England - they both moved to the US after university.
not...but	<b>To emphasise a contrast between two things - sometimes in order to make a correction</b>  <b>Note that</b> this structure is most often used with the verb 'to be'	It <b>wasn't</b> Anne who wanted to speak to you <b>but</b> Jodi.  It <b>isn't</b> blue pens that we need <b>but</b> red.
not only...but also	<b>To emphasise that there are two things - it can express surprise or annoyance</b>	<b>Not only</b> is he good-looking <b>but</b> he can <b>also</b> cook!  It's <b>not only</b> cheap <b>but also</b> practical.
whether...or	<b>To talk about two alternatives</b>  <b>Note that</b> these two words can be placed separately or together	He isn't sure <b>whether</b> it's better to fly <b>or</b> go by train.  <b>Whether</b> or not you agree, we're going to sign the contract.

## 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.

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