

# 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 **both** Brenda **and** Angela **to the seminar.**

**Both** Brenda **and** Angela **are going to the seminar.**

It's available **either** red **or** blue.

I don't know **whether** to fix it **or** buy a new one.

# Construction

Here are some examples of common constructions:

I invited	<b>both</b>	Brenda	<b>and</b>	Angela	to the seminar.
	<b>Both</b>	Brenda	<b>and</b>	Angela	are going to the seminar.
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.	

## 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.

**Either** the sales manager **or** the director is going to attend the conference.

When the second noun is plural, use a plural verb.

**Neither** the director **nor** the sales managers are 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 is/are going to attend the conference.

## Either...or

**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...or

'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.<?xml:namespace prefix = "o" ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />



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



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