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 in	either	red	or	blue.	
I don't know	whether	to fix it	or	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 <u>is</u> going to attend the conference.

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.

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 <u>whether or not</u> you're coming with us?
Have you decided <u>if</u>/<u>whether</u> you're coming with us <u>or not</u>?

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.