

Conjunctions

Conjunctions hold parts of a sentence together, kind of like glue. As with glue, however, there are several types of conjunctions, each one with its own specific use.

AND: And is used to add things or ideas together - one thing plus another thing. For longer lists, and is used between the last two items. And is a joining conjunction.

- "Michael and Sarah went to the movies." Michael went ... Sarah went ... they both went to the movies,
- "Thomas slipped and fell on the ice." Thomas did two things - he slipped, then he fell. And joins the actions.
- "I pulled out the weeds and Jane watered the flowers." Two people each did different things while working in the garden. The two parts could stand alone as sentences - "I pulled out the weeds." "Jane watered the flowers." Since the ideas in the sentences are related to each other, they can be joined by and to form one compound sentence.
- "We went to the store to buy milk, bread, oranges, dog food and coffee." When you write a series in a sentence, use commas between all the items except the last two - there you need to use a conjunction. A comma in front of the and is optional.

OR: Or is used between things or ideas about which there is a choice or when we don't know the answer. Or is a selective conjunction.

- "Michael or Sarah went to the movies." One of them went, but not both. We don't know which one.
- "Thomas slipped or fell on the ice." Thomas had a problem on the ice. Did he slip? Did he fall? We don't know, but he did one of them.
- "I will pull out the weeds or Jane will water the flowers." For some reason, these two people cannot both work in the garden. One of them can. Will it be I? Will it be Jane? I don't know. Or tells us that only one of the things will take place.
- "We need to buy milk, juice, iced tea or soda at the store." We evidently need something to drink, but it doesn't matter what it is. We need to choose one of the items in the list. That is what or is telling us.

BUT: But is used to let us know that something happened in a sentence that we did not expect or to prepare us for an excuse. But is a conjunction of differences.

- "Michael went to the movies, but Sarah stayed home." It would have been normal for Sarah to go to the movies with Michael. This time she did something different - she stayed home. But introduces such a difference.
- "Thomas slipped on the ice, but he did not fall." We would expect Thomas to fall when he slipped on the ice. He did something different - he did not fall. But introduces that difference.
- "We were going to pull out the weeds, but Jane decided to water the flowers instead." Jane and I had planned to pull weeds. For whatever reason, Jane began to water the

flowers instead. She did something different from what I had expected. But introduces that difference.

- "We found everything we needed for the camping trip but the first aid kit." The first aid kit was different - it could not be found. But introduces that difference.
- "I did my homework last night, but the dog ate it." But is used quite often to introduce a reason why we did not do something we were supposed to do, like turn in our homework.

SO: So is used to introduce something that follows or is a result of something else. So is a conjunction of consequences.

- "Michael went to the movies, so Sarah went to visit her friend." As a result of Michael's going out by himself, leaving Sarah alone, she decided to go out as well. If Michael had stayed home, Sarah would have stayed home, also. SO introduces the consequence of Michael's action.
- "Thomas slipped and fell on the ice, so he was limping when he arrived home." As a result of slipping and falling, Thomas hurt himself and had to walk with a limp. So introduces the results of the fall.
- "Jane watered the flowers so it would be easier for me to pull out the weeds." Watering softened the soil, with the result that it was easier to pull the weeds out by their roots. SO introduces the result of the watering.
- "We found the first aid kit, so we could finally leave for the camping trip." For reasons of safety, we did not want to go camping without a first aid kit. We finally found it, with the result that we could leave at last. SO introduces that result.

BECAUSE: Because is used to introduce a reason for another action or event. It is a conjunction answering the question 'why?'.
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- "Michael and Sarah went to the movies because there was nothing good on television." Because connects the reason for Michael and Sarah's action with the action itself.
- "Thomas slipped and fell because the sidewalk was covered with ice." Because connects the reason why Thomas fell with the act of slipping and falling.
- "I pulled out the weeds because Jane was allergic to them." Because introduces the reason why Jane did not help me pull out the weeds.
- "We went to the new supermarket for groceries because it was having a sale on fresh fruit." Because introduces the reason why we went to the new store instead of the one we usually went to.