



GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

Methods for Connecting Ideas

Academic writing is most effective when there is a clear flow of argument and logic from one sentence to the next and from one paragraph to the next. Each new paragraph introduces a new topic but should simultaneously signal a progression of your ideas that relates to the main purpose of your writing. Regardless of the length or complexity of the assignment, a piece of writing needs to show coherence, with all the parts connected to one another. As a result, it is important to explore options for connecting ideas through **coordination**, **subordination**, and the use of **transitional expressions**.

Coordination is when you give two or more clauses equal emphasis by connecting them with a coordinating conjunction (**and**, **but**, **or**, **nor**, **so**, **for**, or **yet**). When you use subordination, you give one idea more importance by putting it in an independent clause that is linked to a dependent clause. Transitional expressions are words or phrases used to emphasize the connection between independent clauses. As illustrated below, some connections can be shown using any of the above methods; others rely on specific options.

| Relationship | Coordinators | Subordinators | Transitions |
|--------------------|--------------|---|---|
| Addition | and | | additionally also further furthermore moreover in addition |
| Contrast | but, yet | although even though whereas while | however nevertheless in contrast on the other hand |
| Result | for, so | as because now that once since | accordingly as a result consequently hence thus then |
| Alternative | or, nor | unless | alternatively instead otherwise |
| Time | | before since | first then |

| | |
|-------|------------------|
| after | finally |
| when | today |
| while | yesterday |
| as | at first |
| | at the same time |
| | afterwards |

Remember this is only a partial list. Many other words or phrases may be used in addition to those listed above.

OPTIONS FOR CONNECTING IDEAS

- **Addition**

Coordination: The class entered a joint project in the competition, **and** two students entered separately.

Transitional expression: The class entered a joint project in the competition; **in addition**, two students entered separately.

Note that English does not have a subordinating conjunction to connect an additional or similar idea.

- **Contrast**

Coordination: Anthropologists can make hypotheses, **but** they cannot prove them.

Subordination: **Although** anthropologists can make hypotheses, they cannot prove them.

Transitional expression: Anthropologists can make hypotheses. **However**, they cannot prove them.

- **Result**

Coordination: The afternoon flight was cancelled, **so** I changed my reservation to the evening flight.

Subordination: **Because** the afternoon flight was cancelled, I changed my reservation to the evening flight.

Transitional expression: The afternoon flight was cancelled. **As a result**, I changed my reservation to the evening flight.

- **Alternative**

Coordination: I will need to hire additional staff, **or** the project can be postponed.

Subordination: **Unless** the project is postponed, I will need to hire additional staff.

Transitional expression: I will need to hire additional staff; **otherwise**, the project will be postponed.

- **Time**

Subordination: **After** the final performance, the cast celebrated with the director of the play.

Transitional expression: Last night was the final performance; **afterwards**, the cast celebrated with the director of the play.

In each of the above relationships, the examples of coordination, subordination, and transitional expressions basically have the same meaning but they are slightly different in emphasis. Coordinators and subordinators keep ideas closely related within a single sentence. Using a subordinator also allows you to emphasize the relationship since the conjunction can be placed at the beginning of the sentence. A transition, on the other hand, creates a more dramatic effect since it begins a new sentence and is followed by a pause (indicated by the comma).

EXERCISE IN CONNECTING IDEAS

Here are three sets of related ideas taken from a student's paragraph. In the space provided, connect each pair of sentences using the methods discussed above. First decide what relationship exists between the two ideas, and then use the chart to help you select an appropriate **coordinator, subordinator, and transition.**

Anthropological research has shown that human behavior is very diverse. Human habits can vary endlessly.

Coordination:

Subordination:

Transitional expression:

Most animals reveal the same patterns of behavior within any given species. The human species has very few patterns that are shared by all people.

Coordination:

Subordination:

Transitional expression:

All humans have similar physical and mental structures. One might expect all human behavior to be similar.

Coordination:

Subordination:

Transitional expression:

Different societies differ in almost every aspect of their behavior. They speak very different languages.

Coordination:

Subordination:

Transitional expression: