

Exercises in scientific writing: coordinators, subordinators

Law



The full PDF (with exercises) can be downloaded from <http://louisville.edu/faculty/lwolf02/writing-about-data>

Joining Sentences with Subordinators

One of the biggest differences between mature, effective writing and more basic writing is that mature writers use subordinators to show relationships between ideas. The more complex the information that you are writing about, the more important subordinators are. Unfortunately, when beginning writers start using subordinators, they often produce sentence fragments or punctuate sentences incorrectly.

Therefore, this chapter has the following goals:

1. Encourage you to use subordinators to connect ideas together.
2. Show that subordinators can be used in either the beginning or the middle of sentences.
3. Ensure that you understand the correct rules for punctuating subordinators.

What is a subordinator? Subordinators are words that join sentences and help us highlight a variety of relationships between ideas, including cause-effect relationships, contrasts, conditions, and concessions.

Here are the subordinators we use most often:

Subordinator	Logical Relationship
although, though, even though, While, whereas	Contrast/concession
because, since	Cause/Result
before, after, when, Time	Condition
however, until, as soon as	Example

While we can model X-ray emissions, such an approach is often laborious, time-consuming, and impractical. The tuff absorbed a great amount of water after the earthquake because it consisted of porous material. The stress cannot be reproduced if the blocks are too large.

Some heart attack victims in our study confessed that they phoned clients and rescheduled meetings before they called an ambulance. When we put a subordinator in front of a sentence, we change the sentence from an independent clause to a dependent (or subordinate) clause. Here's a quick review of independent and dependent clauses. Independent clause: Contains a subject and verb and can stand alone as a complete thought. An independent clause is a sentence. Examples of independent clauses: Jim studied. It was very noisy. Our class meets at 9: 00 in the morning.

Dependent clause: Contains a subject and verb, but can not stand alone as a complete thought. A dependent clause cannot stand alone as a sentence.

Examples of dependent clauses: When Jim studied. Because it was very noisy. After our class meets at 9: 00 in the morning. Copyright 2006-2007

Joanna Wolfe. Support for these materials provided by -the Engineering Information Foundation. -3- Note that all of the dependent clauses above begin with a subordinator, such as when, because, after. To turn these dependent clauses into complete sentences, we he became anxious.

ependent clause independent clause” can stand as a complete sentence

Because it was very noisy, he got into a fight with his roommate. After our class meets at 9: 00 in the morning, I need coffee. These sentences can also

be written so that the independent clause comes first: Jim became anxious when he studied He got into a fight with his roommate because it was very noisy. I need coffee fter our class meets at 9: 00 in the morning Punctuating

subordinate clauses 1 . When the dependent (subordinate) clause comes

first, it is always followed by a comma. Because the study sample is small , additional research is needed.

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If the blocks are too large , the stress cannot be reproduced. Before you start, make sure you have all the needed parts. Whereas a hoist can only lift and lower, a crane can move loads in horizontal and vertical planes. 2. When the dependent (subordinate) clause comes second, a comma is not used” unless a contrast or concession subordinator is used, in which case the comma is optional. Additional research is needed because the study sample is small. [no comma] The stress cannot be reproduced if the blocks are too large. [no comma] Make sure you have all the needed parts before you start.. no comma] A crane can move loads in horizontal and vertical planes whereas a hoist can only lift and lower. [comma optional because contrast subordinator (whereas) is used] Presenting Bad News: Joining Sentences to Show Concession We use the contrast subordinators although, though, even though, while, whereas to show contrast. But they do more than contrast: they de-emphasize the points they re attached to and show concession. Concessive subordinators are very useful for presenting " bad news": they concede that a problem or shortcoming or flaw exists while de-emphasizing this problem.

Emphasizing the good news Concessive subordinators are particularly useful in emphasizing a study or test's good points while still acknowledging mistakes or flaws. For instance, we might write: Although the study's design has some flaws, problem conceded Although the tests were done in a lab, the results are promising the findings should be applicable to the real world. good point emphasized These sentences use the subordinator although to concede some points, but still leave the reader on a high note” the promising nature of the studies.

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Emphasizing the bad news Sometimes, however, you want to emphasize the problems. This is especially important when you want to warn readers about potential safety issues. In this situation, you should attach the good point to the concessive subordinator and put the problem in the main clause.

Although the findings are promising, good point conceded the tests were done in a lab and may not be applicable to "real use" situations. roblem emphasized This sentence, in contrast to the examples above, ends on a negative point.

No emphasis/Equal emphasis If you want to stress the good and bad news equally, use one of the contrast coordinators, but or yet to join the two clauses. The results are promising, but the design has some flaws. This sentence stresses neither the results nor the flaws. The two clauses are given equal emphasis. Note that a comma precedes the coordinator. -8-

Summary of contrast and concession words Word Type Subordinators Coordinators Contrast Although Even though Though While But, yet Concession Note that whereas generally works better for emphasizing contrasts than for emphasizing concessions.

Subordinators: Join two clauses and de-emphasize the clause they are attached to. Coordinators: Join two clauses and give equal emphasis to the ideas they join. Punctuation: If the subordinator appears in the first clause, use a comma: Although the study's design has some flaws, the results are promising. If a subordinator appears in the second clause, do not use a comma. (exception: an optional comma may be used before the contrast/concession subordinators although, even though, though, while,

hereas): The study's design has some flaws even though the results are promising.

If a coordinator" such as but, yet" connects two independent clauses (complete sentences), a comma should be placed before the coordinator:

The study's design has some flaws, but the results are promising. -12-

Coordinators, Subordinators, and Transitions The English language has three basic types of linguistic patterns for connecting main ideas: coordinators, subordinators and transitions. The table below summarizes the purposes and differences among these connectors.

Connector type	Structure	Where they connect	Emphasis
and	One sentence	Middle of	Give equal emphasis to two closely connected clauses.
but	One sentence	Middle of	Give equal emphasis to two closely connected clauses.
yet	One sentence	Middle of	Give equal emphasis to two closely connected clauses.