

Making English Grammar Meaningful and Useful

Mini Lesson #13

Connectors: Words that Connect

The **purpose** of this lesson is to present and contrast the many kinds of words that connect word groups together. These connecting words are called **Connectors**.

CONNECTORS are words that **connect** word groups together. They can **connect** individual words. They can **connect** dependent clauses and phrases to the sentences in which they are found. They can even **connect** separate sentences.

Simple Connectors are usually called conjunctions. They are used to connect simple ideas. These ideas can be expressed in words, phrases or short independent clauses. The most common **Simple Connectors** are ‘**and**’, ‘**but**’, and ‘**or**’, but can also include ‘**so**’, ‘**yet**’, ‘**either**’, ‘**neither**’, and ‘**nor**’. The following examples show how **Simple Connectors** can be used:

Connecting words: The man was friendly **and** generous.

Connecting phrases: The young women either went to work **or** to school.

Connecting clauses: The fans went to the game early, **but** they didn’t get good seats.

Sentence Connectors connect complete ideas. These ideas can be joined with a semicolon, but it is advisable to punctuate them as separate sentences. The **Connector** is usually used with the second sentence, and is not always found at the beginning of the sentence. Examples of **Sentence Connectors** are ‘**therefore**’, ‘**however**’, ‘**moreover**’, ‘**furthermore**’, ‘**consequently**’, ‘**as a result**’, and ‘**finally**’ to name a few. The following examples show how **Sentence Connectors** are used:

It rained. **Therefore**, they didn’t go.

The weather was good. They didn’t go out, **however**.

The test was hard. **Furthermore**, I didn’t study very much. **As a result**, I didn’t do well.

Most **Dependent Clauses** and **Phrases** are connected to their **Main Clauses** by words which have various names in traditional grammar, such as relative pronoun, complex preposition, subordinate adverb, and subordinate conjunctions. These words all express particular grammatical functions, but they are more complicated than they need to be. Basically, all of these words **connect** their clauses or phrases to the main clause of their sentences. Therefore, they can be collectively referred to as **Clause** or **Phrase Connectors**. They can be further identified by adding the kind of phrase or clause in their names. For example, an **Adverb Clause Connector** is a word that **connects** an **Adverb Clause** to the **Main Clause**. A **Noun Clause Connector** connects a **Noun Clause** to the **Main Clause**. An **Adverb Phrase Connector** connects an **Adverb Phrase** to the **Main Clause**.

ELLs find these **Clause** and **Phrase Connectors** confusing because several words can be used with more than one kind of clause or phrase. For example, the word ‘**that**’ can be both an **Adjective Clause Connector** and a **Noun Clause Connector**. Most question words such as ‘**when**’, ‘**why**’, and ‘**where**’ can be both **Adverb Clause Connectors** and **Noun Clause Connectors**. Some of the **Dependent Clause** and **Phrase Connectors** are presented in the following chart.

CLAUSE and PHRASE CONNECTORS

Adverb Clause Connectors (Subordinate Conjunctions)	Adverb Phrase Connectors (Complex Prepositions)
when, before, while, since after, because, though, although, even though,	because of due to, despite in spite of
Adjective Clause Connectors (Relative Pronouns)	Noun Clause Connectors (Subordinate conjunctions)
who, whom, which, that, whose	that, what, why if, who, when whether, where

The following sentences illustrate the various **Connectors** presented in this lesson.

- She wanted to attend, **but** she had too much homework. (Simple Connector)
- She had too much homework. **Therefore**, she didn’t go. (Sentence Connector)
- She attended the 1st class **before** she attended this one. (Adverb Clause Connector)
- She’s attending this class **because** she wants to graduate. (Adverb Clause Connector)
- She attended the session **that** was in the other building. (Adjective Clause Connector)
- The session **that** she attended was very interesting. (Adjective Clause Connector)
- Yesterday she said **that** she would attend that session. (Noun Clause Connector)
- That** she will attend is not a surprise. (Noun Clause Connector)
- She was late to this session **because of** heavy traffic. (Adverb Phrase Connector)
- The session was held outside **in spite of** the rain (Adverb Phrase Connector)

This lesson was developed by John Nelson and Tymofey Wowk, 2012