

What is the difference between a connective and a conjunction?

The aim is to give a concise and workable definition that is grammatically accurate, but which is easy enough for children to grasp, understand and most importantly apply to their writing. So...

Connectives

A connective is an umbrella term to describe words or phrases that link clauses or sentences. There are two types of connectives: **conjunctions** and **connecting adverbs**. Both have subtly different functions.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are most often single words (e.g. since, until), whereas connecting adverbs can be several words making a phrase (e.g. on the other hand). There are two types of conjunctions: **coordinating conjunctions** and **subordinating conjunctions**.

Coordinating Conjunctions:

There are a small number of coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, yet, so, for, nor). These allow writers to link ideas of equal weight within one sentence and can be placed between two main clauses.

E.g.

My name is Mina **and** I love the night.

They reflect the kind of conjunctions we use in speech to link our ideas together, when we do not have time to plan how to convey an idea using complex language constructions. Gesture, intonation etc can be used to make up for any lack of clarity in our spoken language. When we write, we have more time to plan our ideas and try to convey subtleties in our messages through a greater range of conjunctions.

Subordinating Conjunctions:

These link clauses within sentences and allow several clauses to appear within the same sentence, as well as allowing the writer to express a relationship between them. The subordinating conjunction indicates the start of the subordinate clause.

E.g. (subordinate clause underlined and conjunction in bold)

I went to the park despite the bad weather.

Because the subordinate clause can be moved around in the sentence, the sentence could begin with the subordinating conjunction.

E.g.

***Despite the bad weather**, I went to the park.*

In the case of the conjunction 'despite', it cannot function on its own and needs to be attached to a clause to make sense. In fact, many conjunctions cannot appear on their own without an adjoining clause attached.

E.g.

Despite, he went to the park. INCORRECT!

If the conjunction did appear on its own and still made grammatical sense, it would indicate that the word is actually working as a connecting adverb. You would never see a subordinating conjunction working alone as a single grammatical unit in a sentence.

Connecting Adverbs

A connecting adverb links the sentence to a previous one therefore creates cohesion throughout a text, not just cohesion within a sentence (which is the role of a conjunction).

Connecting adverbs can stand on their own (in other words not linked to a clause) and usually appear at the start of the sentence, allowing for a link to be made with the previous sentence, or previous paragraph.

E.g. (connecting adverb in bold)

On the other hand, there is mounting evidence to suggest that aliens do exist.

As the sentence can function without the connecting adverb (try removing 'on the other hand' from the sentence and reading it - it will still make sense) you can tell that it is an addition chunk of information from the main clause. To show that it is an additional grammatical chunk, a comma is required after the connecting adverb and before the main clause.

In a Nutshell

- **The term connective refers to two types of linking devices which function in different ways.**
- **A connecting adverb can stand on its own as a unit of grammatical meaning. It can be tagged in front of a main clause to connect the sentence to the previous one, or the previous paragraph. When it is tagged in front of a main clause, it needs a comma to separate it from the main clause. In the Draft Curriculum, this is referred to as a 'fronted adverbial'.**
- **A subordinating conjunction cannot stand on its own and is always followed by the subordinate clause.**