



## Cohesive writing

# Conjunction

### WHAT IS COHESION?

Cohesion is a quality of effective writing. Cohesive writing helps readers understand how the details relate to the overall argument of a text and to follow it easily. The quality of cohesion in a written text is achieved by various means, which make different elements of the text hold together well: logical conjunction, grammatical referencing, lexical choice and paragraphing. This resource focuses on conjunction.

### CREATING LOGIC IN A TEXT

In academic writing, ideas need to be connected according to some kind of logic (Eggins, 1994, p 105). The connections may have to do with cause & effect (*because, so, as a result*), or time (*first, next, then*), or simple addition (*and, in addition, further, moreover*) or comparison & contrast (*however, on the other hand*). These sorts of connecting words join different parts of a text together in a way that creates a relationship of **logic**.

Logical relationships can be expressed in various ways: through specific words called ‘conjunctions’ (eg *and, or, because, so*), or through prepositional phrases (eg *after that, in contrast*) or through adverbs (eg *thus, alternatively*). Whatever we call such expressions in descriptive grammar, they function to help readers see relationships between sentences and paragraphs, and connect different parts of the text logically.

In the following example sentence, the second clause (beginning with ‘and’) simply **adds** extra information to the first clause in the sentence:

*Justice implies a sense of equality for all, **and** it implies an acceptance of a standard that applies to the whole community.*

In the next example, the new information in the second clause **contrasts** the information in the first clause.

*Legal aid may not provide for total **but** equality due to means testing, lack of funding and the nature of differing court hearings, it remains a well established feature of Australia’s legal system.*

In these examples, logical cohesion is created by a single word, called a conjunction, that join clauses together. In other cases, logical cohesion can be created between separate sentences or paragraphs, by using words or phrases called discourse markers or logical connectives (eg *in other words, however, consequently*). These come in various forms:

- prepositional phrases (*on the contrary, in spite of*)
- prepositions introducing a noun phrase (*besides the suitable conditions*) or a non-finite verb (*besides finding suitable conditions*)
- adverbs (*alternatively*).

### IDENTIFYING LOGICAL RELATIONS

The following text is from the conclusion to a nursing essay. The connective words, which create logical relationships between parts of the text, are indicated in bold:



### Example: logical relations

**In conclusion**, the physical health of the mother will greatly influence the development of the foetus. In the majority of cases, the factors influencing the mother's health, **such as** smoking, malnutrition, drugs and diseases, are closely related, **so that** it becomes difficult for researchers to determine which factor, and to what extent that factor is responsible for the adverse effects on the development of the foetus. **However**, a great deal of the research associated with prenatal development does indicate that the main influences on the environment and development of the foetus are from controllable causes.

## COMPARING LOGICAL RELATIONS

In the following two texts, connectives are in bold, and the logical function of relations they express are identified in the right column.

Example: logical relationships (text A)	Function
All children in Australia have the right to be educated in their mother tongue. Many children in the past have spent months or years in school without understanding lessons. <b>In fact</b> , many migrant children are failing in our education system <b>due to</b> the lack of bilingual education programmes. <b>Furthermore</b> , the UN report on language and education states that children who become literate in their own language have the best chance of educational success. <b>Additionally</b> , recent discussion concerning the latest figures on university entrance indicate that migrant students perform more poorly than native English speakers at present. State governments should <b>therefore</b> address this issue by setting up bilingual education programmes for all NESB migrant children. <b>An example</b> of the success of such programmes is the 'two-way' system currently in place in parts of the Northern Territory. <sup>2</sup>	<i>clarifying</i> <i>causative</i> <i>additive</i> <i>additive</i> <i>concluding</i> <i>exemplifying</i>
Example: logical relationships (text B)	function
The gradual migration of life from the ocean to the land was another major step that made many advances possible. <b>Eventually</b> , plants and animals divided into males and females and possibilities increased for developing new and varied species. <b>To date</b> , more than 400 000 species of plants and 1 200 000 species of animals have developed. <b>Gradually</b> , the senses of sight and hearing improved in animals and brains grew and developed. <b>Finally</b> , intelligence progressed, leading to the development of human beings.	<i>sequencing in</i> <i>chronological order</i>

The connective words in these texts create different logical relationships. Text example A is from the beginning of an essay, where an argument is being developed, so it is providing supportive evidence for an initial claim. To make the point, it is suggesting that one thing caused another, by drawing on various logical connectors. Text B is from a scientific report, and is concerned with describing how a process unfolds over time, so it is organised around a temporal logic.

## CONJUNCTION AS EXPRESSION OF REASONING

Any text, written or spoken, uses connective words to establish logical relations of some kind. In spoken language we tend to use conjunctions to connect *clauses*. In academic writing, the logical relations tend to be established between *sentences*. In the case of writing that expresses cause and effect, it is also common for logical relations to be expressed *within* a clause.

A logical relationship can be expressed through verbs (eg this *caused* that) or phrases (eg *as a result*). The grammatical choice can affect the level of abstraction in writing. Compare the following sentences which all express *causation*:

*The British decided to establish a penal colony at Botany Bay **because** they needed to dispose of convicts. There were also other reasons.*



Here, two events are represented: *the British decided* and *they needed*. These events are connected by the conjunction *because*. Compare this with the next example:

*The British decided to establish a penal colony at Botany Bay as a result of the need to dispose of convicts, among other reasons.*

In this example, there is only one clause. The second event is turned into a 'thing' or noun (*the need to dispose of convicts*). In the next example, the first event is turned into an abstract noun (*decision*).

*The decision to establish a penal colony at Botany Bay was due to more factors than the need to dispose of convicts.*

In this case, the thinking going on at the time is represented through two abstract nouns (*decision* and *need*), which are connected logically by a conjunctive adjective (*due to*), and the people doing the thinking are left out, making it seem almost as though no one is responsible for the thinking and actions. Such grammatical choices are common in academic writing, where events and perceptions of cause and effect frequently seem to exist independently of human agency.

Logical connections can be expressed in various ways, from the simple use of conjunctions to join clauses, to more subtle and complex expressions of logic through choice of verbs, adjectives and prepositions, and use of abstract nouns.

## CONJUNCTION AND THE STRUCTURE OF ARGUMENTS

Conjunctions and discourse markers not only establish connections between different bits of information in a text, they are also useful to signal a text's overall structure and **rhetorical organisation**. To recognise the difference, look at the use of the same connectives in the following two examples:

*Diana was kept very busy. First, she had to donate blood. Next, she caught the plane to Geneva. Finally, she attended the conference.*

*Diana is a very generous person. First, she donates blood regularly. Next, she's involved in charity work. Finally, she keeps an open house.*

In the first example, the connectives *first*, *next* and *finally* refer to a temporal sequence of events. In the second example, the same connectives are used to organise the information rhetorically, adding evidence in stages to strengthen an initial claim and persuade the reader of the point.

## CREATING CONNECTIONS IN VARIOUS WAYS

In each of the following pairs of sentences, see how logical connections are created, by either using a simple conjunction (version a – in italics and bold), or by using some other grammatical choice, such as a verb that itself expresses a logical connection, or a verb phrase or a preposition (version b – in bold):

- 1a. Students misbehave **because** they have problems with life at school.
- 1b. Student misbehaviour is **caused** by the students' problems with life at school.
- 2a. CSIRO will plan comprehensively and **thereby** identify training needs.
- 2b. CSIRO's comprehensive planning **will result** in the identification of training needs.
- 3a. CSIRO will plan comprehensively and **thereby** identify training needs.
- 3b. CSIRO will identify training needs **through** comprehensive planning

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**TABLE 1: CONNECTIVE WORDS**

Function	Between sentences	Between independent clauses	Between dependent clauses	Others
adding information	also, too, besides, in addition, moreover, furthermore	and		another + Noun, an additional + N
contrasting information	in contrast, nevertheless, nonetheless, however	but, yet	although, even though, whereas, while	in spite of + Noun, despite + Noun
exemplifying information, explaining, clarifying	for example, for instance, indeed, in fact			an example of + N, such as + N, that is
concluding	in conclusion			
summarising	to summarise			
ordering information chronologically	first, second ..., next, last, meanwhile, after that, since then		before, after, until	the first + N, the second + N, before the + N, since the +N
prioritising information	more importantly, above all			the most important + N
alternating causation (reasoning)	otherwise	or, for	if, unless	
showing cause (effect)	accordingly, as a result, consequently, hence		because, since	because of, as a result, due to, as a consequence of, the result of, the effect of X on Y, the consequence of, the cause of, the reason for, to result in, to cause, to have an effect on, to affect
comparing information	similarly, also, too	and	as, just as	like, just like, not only ... but also, similar to, the same as, both ... and ..., to compare with
conceding	however	but, yet	although, though, even though	despite+ Noun, in spite of + N
showing strong contrast	however, by comparison, on the other hand	but		different from, to differ from, to compare to, unlike

Adapted from Oshima, A & Hogue, A (1991) *Writing Academic English* (2nd edn), Addison & Wesley, Menlo Park (CA).

