Subordinating conjunctions for kids: because, although, when, if

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What a subordinating conjunction is, a list of the 20 children meet most, how it differs from and, but and so, and sentences to practise joining ideas.

A subordinating conjunction is a word such as because, although, when or if that joins a main idea to one that cannot stand alone. "We stayed in because it rained" works, but "because it rained" on its own leaves the listener waiting. Peabody's conjunctions page has a definition, examples and three questions with answers, free through the end of 2026, with no sign-up and no ads.

Children use these words in speech long before they name them. This post gives the 20 they meet most, how they differ from and, but and so, the one comma rule, and ten pairs of sentences to join.

The 20 children meet most

- Conjunction: because · What it shows: reason · In a sentence: We stayed in because it rained.
- Conjunction: since · What it shows: reason or time · In a sentence: Since it was late, we went home.
- Conjunction: so that · What it shows: purpose · In a sentence: I spoke softly so that the baby could sleep.
- Conjunction: if · What it shows: condition · In a sentence: If it snows, we will build a fort.
- Conjunction: unless · What it shows: condition · In a sentence: We will play outside unless it storms.
- Conjunction: when · What it shows: time · In a sentence: When the bell rang, we lined up.
- Conjunction: while · What it shows: time · In a sentence: The dog barked while we ate.
- Conjunction: before · What it shows: time · In a sentence: Wash your hands before you eat.
- Conjunction: after · What it shows: time · In a sentence: We played tag after school ended.
- Conjunction: until · What it shows: time · In a sentence: Wait here until I call you.
- Conjunction: as soon as · What it shows: time · In a sentence: Call me as soon as you get home.
- Conjunction: once · What it shows: time · In a sentence: Once the soup boils, turn down the heat.

- Conjunction: although · What it shows: contrast · In a sentence: Although it was cold, we went swimming.
- Conjunction: though · What it shows: contrast · In a sentence: I kept going though my legs were tired.
- Conjunction: even though · What it shows: contrast · In a sentence: She smiled even though she lost.
- Conjunction: whereas · What it shows: contrast · In a sentence: Cats nap in the day, whereas owls sleep then.
- Conjunction: as · What it shows: reason or time · In a sentence: As the sun set, the sky turned pink.
- Conjunction: where · What it shows: place · In a sentence: Put the box where I can see it.
- Conjunction: wherever · What it shows: place · In a sentence: Wherever we go, the dog follows.
- Conjunction: whenever · What it shows: time · In a sentence: Whenever it rains, the frogs sing.

Coordinating or subordinating

- The words · Coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (FANBOYS) · Subordinating conjunctions: because, although, when, if, while, until and more
- What they join · Coordinating conjunctions: Two ideas that can each stand alone · Subordinating conjunctions: A main idea and an idea that leans on it
- Example · Coordinating conjunctions: It was cold, so I wore a hat. · Subordinating conjunctions: I wore a hat because it was cold.
- Test · Coordinating conjunctions: Cover either half and it still makes a sentence. · Subordinating conjunctions: Cover the main half and what is left cannot stand alone.

Both kinds of joining make longer sentences, and a child who can do both has a lot of choices when they write.

The comma rule

When the leaning part comes first, put a comma after it. When it comes second, you usually do not need one.

- Order: Leaning part first · Sentence: Because it rained, we stayed in.
- Order: Leaning part second · Sentence: We stayed in because it rained.

Say it aloud. The pause after "Because it rained" is where the comma goes.

Ten pairs to join

Each pair is two short sentences. Ask the child to join them with a word from the list above. More than one answer is fine.

- Two sentences: It was cold. I wore a hat. · Joined: I wore a hat because it was cold.
- Two sentences: We finished lunch. We ran outside. · Joined: After we finished lunch, we ran outside.
- Two sentences: The dog barked. The mail came. · Joined: The dog barked when the mail came.
- Two sentences: It might rain. We will stay in. · Joined: If it rains, we will stay in.
- Two sentences: I was tired. I kept reading. · Joined: I kept reading even though I was tired.
- Two sentences: Mia sang. Her dad cooked. · Joined: Mia sang while her dad cooked.
- Two sentences: Wait here. The bus comes. · Joined: Wait here until the bus comes.
- Two sentences: The cake cooled. We made the icing. · Joined: We made the icing while the cake cooled.
- Two sentences: You clean your room. You can play. · Joined: You can play after you clean your room.
- Two sentences: It was sunny. We stayed in the shade. · Joined: Although it was sunny, we stayed in the shade.

When it is taught

Children use because in 1st grade (L.1.1g), and by 3rd grade the standards name coordinating and subordinating conjunctions (L.3.1h). Start with because, when and if, and add although and while later. The conjunctions page has the definition, examples and three questions to try, and the parts of speech post shows where conjunctions sit among the eight jobs a word can do. Then ask your child to find a because or a when in a story from the library.

Peabody does not have a conjunctions game. It has a page for each skill, flashcards linked from the pages, and the grammar hub.

Questions grown-ups ask

What is a subordinating conjunction in simple words?

It is a joining word that makes one idea depend on another. "Because it rained" cannot stand alone, so it needs a main idea such as "we stayed in".

What are the most common ones?

Because, when, if, while, after, before, until, although and since. The table above has twenty.

Is "because" a subordinating conjunction?

Yes. It joins a reason to the main idea.

Can a sentence start with because?

Yes, as long as the main idea follows. "Because it rained, we stayed in" is a full sentence. "Because it rained." on its own is a fragment.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/subordinating-conjunctions-for-kids