Section 17  conjunctions

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language notes

English has two types of linking word, conjunctions like but and adverbs like however, and these two types of word don’t work in the same way grammatically. Not all languages are structured like this, so some students may take time to get used to connecting clauses correctly with conjunctions.

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language notes

German wenn can mean ‘if’, which can lead to mistakes.

*When I was you, I wouldn’t do it like that.

possible further activities

Personalisation  Students write sentences about themselves, completing some or all of the following:

I’m sometimes (un)happy because …
I get tired if …
I get angry when …
My life was better/worse when …
I often … while I’m …ing.

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language notes

For speakers of languages that work differently from English, it may seem strange to have a conjunction (which joins two clauses) right at the beginning of a sentence instead of between the clauses.

possible further activities

Personalisation  Students write sentences about themselves, completing some or all of the following:

When I’m bored, I …
When I have a free day, I …
If I need help, I …
Before I go to bed, I …

Internet  Get students to look for interesting sentences on the internet beginning “When I’m bored I …”

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.
language notes

In students' languages, time conjunctions may normally be followed by future tenses:

*I'll phone you when I'll arrive.

It's not only time conjunctions and if that are followed by present tenses with a future meaning. More advanced students will learn that this happens in most subordinate clauses:

*I'll stop where I find a parking place.

They'll give us as much as we ask for.

The man who marries my daughter will need a lot of patience.

Sentences with after and before may be confusing for some students. For example, I spent a year in China after I finished studying may be interpreted as meaning 'I spent a year in China, and afterwards I finished studying'.

German als can mean ‘when’, which can lead to mistakes.

*As I was three, I could already read.

possible further activities

Personalisation Students complete some or all of the following sentences:

I won't be happy until …

Life will be better when …

I will get married when …

Internet Get students to look for interesting sentences on the internet beginning "I won't be happy until …" or "I won't rest until …".

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language notes

Speakers of some languages may double up conjunctions, combining because and so, or although and but.

*Because he shouted at her, so she started crying.

*Although I was angry, but I did not show it.

possible further activities

Personalisation Get students to complete the following sentences:

I'm (un)happy because …

I'm (un)happy although …

Then get them to rewrite their sentences like this:

……….., so I'm (un)happy.

……….., but I'm (un)happy.

A silly song If you’re feeling really frivolous, you could get the students singing a First World War soldiers’ song (not so silly in their context), sung to the tune of ‘Auld Lang Syne’:

We're here because we're here because we're here because we're here;

we're here because we're here because we're here because we're here.
language notes
Not all students’ languages allow them to drop repeated words after and and or in the same way as English.

possible further activities

Personalisation Get students to write three things about themselves that the others may not know, using and with no unnecessary repetition. Possible structures:

- I’m …, … and …
- I can …, … and …
- I have …, … and …
- I’ve got …, … and …
- I play …, … and …
- I speak …, … and …
- I like …, … and …
- I hate …, … and …

Do the same again with negative structures and or.

language notes
In formal writing, it’s best to balance these structures, so that the same kind of expression comes after each. So for example, We had time either to see the cathedral or to visit the museum is better stylistically than We either had time to see the cathedral or to visit the museum. The rule isn’t always followed in speech or informal writing, and it’s not an important point for students at this level.

possible further activities

Things that go together Say some words, and tell students to put each word in a phrase with another word that makes a pair, using both … and. Like this:
- ‘women’ – ‘both women and men’
- ‘cats’ – ‘both cats and dogs’
- ‘green’ – ‘both green and red’

Other possible words:
- hands, France, food, English, Europe, history, iron, schools

Vary it by changing from both … and to either … or and neither … nor.