

The conjunctions and, or and but

The most important among the coordinating conjunctions are and, but and or. Let's explore the uses of these three little words.

And

The conjunction and is used to suggest:

a) That one action follows another in the chronological order.

Jane sent in her applications and waited for a call from the HR office.

b) That one idea is the result of another

Rain began to fall and the creek rose rapidly.

And can also be used to suggest a kind of comment on something mentioned in the first clause.

James became addicted to drugs – and that was hardly surprising.

But

The conjunction but is used to suggest a contrast.

It was a sunny day, but the wind was cold. (Here the second clause suggests a contrast that is unexpected in the light of the first clause.)

The stick was thin but it was strong.

He was ill but he went to work.

She is poor but honest.

But can be used with the meaning of 'with the exception of'.

Everybody but James turned up.

Or

The conjunction or is used to suggest that only one possibility can be realized.

You can have tea or coffee.

You can work hard or you can fail.