

Subordinating conjunctions are used to connect words, phrases, and clauses of unequal importance. They're used to say why, where, or when something happens.

See also:

Present simple **1** Modal verbs **56**

Defining relative clauses **81**

111.1 SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS FOR PURPOSE

"So that" can be used to talk about the purpose of an action. It is followed by another clause.



ACTION



PURPOSE

He complained **so that** he'd get a refund.

"So that" is often followed by modal verbs such as "can," "could," and "would."

"In order to" has a similar meaning to "so that," but it's followed by a verb in its base form.



He called the company **in order to** complain.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

She went back to the store **in order to** show them her receipt.



The assistant took the receipt **to** process the refund.



In informal speech, "in order" is often dropped.

If the main verb is in the past tense, the verb after "so that" usually refers to the past.

She reported the problem **so that** it could be fixed.



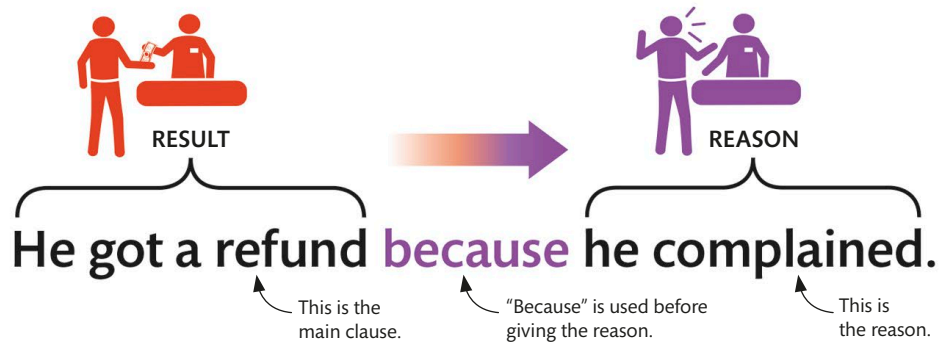
If the main verb is in the present tense, the verb after "so that" usually refers to the present or future.

They check everything **so that** customers don't receive broken items.



111.2 CAUSE AND REASON

"Because" is used to talk about why something happens or the reasons behind a decision.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

It's a noisy town **because** there are lots of cars.



My village is quiet **because** there are only a few families here.



I decided to move to the country **because** it's beautiful.



111.3 CONTRAST AND CONCESSION

"Although" is used to talk about something that is unexpectedly true.
"Even though" means the same thing as "although," and it's more common in speech.

{ **Although**
Even though }

I got up early, I was late to work.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Although I've done it before, I found the run very difficult.



Even though I have two cousins, I've never met them.



I'm going to the beach this weekend, **even though** I can't swim.



111.4 "WHEN"

English uses "when" as a conjunction to talk about events or actions in the future that must happen before another event or action can take place. These phrases are called subordinate time clauses and are usually used with the present simple.



FIRST EVENT



SECOND EVENT

When it gets dark, he'll light the fire.

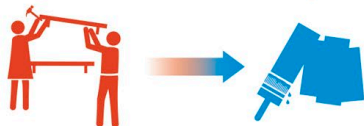
"When" indicates that the first event has not happened yet.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

When I finish my report, I'll call you.



I'll put up shelves when the paint dries.



When you get home, will you make dinner?



When it stops raining, I'll go out.



Subordinate time clauses can also be used to ask about future events.

ANOTHER WAY TO SAY IT

UK English sometimes uses the present perfect instead of the present simple in subordinate time clauses.



When it has stopped raining, we'll go outside.

We'll go outside when it has stopped raining.

We won't go outside until it has stopped raining.

The present perfect still describes a future event.

111.5 "AS SOON AS"

"As soon as" has a similar meaning to "when," but it implies that the second event will take place immediately once the first event is complete.



NOW

I'll call you **as soon as** I leave work.

[I'll call you immediately when I leave work.]

! COMMON MISTAKES TENSES AFTER TIME CONJUNCTIONS

Future forms are not used after "when" and "as soon as," even if the clause is referring to the future.

The present simple describes the first event, even though it is a future event.

When **it gets dark**, he'll light the fire. ✓

When **it will get dark**, he'll light the fire. ✗

Even though this refers to the future, it is incorrect to use a future form.

111.6 "WHILE"

"While" is used to connect two clauses that are happening at the same time.



I watered the plants **while** my husband mowed the lawn.

FURTHER EXAMPLES



I chopped the vegetables **while** Ted washed the potatoes.



I didn't get any sleep **while** the owl was hooting outside.



I read the newspaper **while** I waited for the kettle to boil.