

Task 2 · Lesson 1 — Conjunctions of contrast & cause/effect

Three ways to join two ideas, and how to pick the right one.

NAME _____

DATE _____

TEACHER / SELF-STUDY _____

Task 2 essays constantly weigh a view against its opposite, and constantly explain why something happens. The words that do this job — **although, despite, however** for contrast; **because, due to, therefore** for cause and effect — are graded under **Grammatical Range & Accuracy**. Using several of them accurately, with the right word class after each one, is one of the fastest ways to move a script from Band 6 to Band 7.

- 1 **Three constructions, not three synonyms.** Every contrast and cause/effect word belongs to one of three grammar families, and each family is followed by a different kind of language: a **clause** (subject + verb), a **noun phrase / gerund**, or a new sentence joined by a **connector**.
- 2 **The word decides the construction — not the other way round.** Choosing *although* when a noun phrase follows (or *despite* when a clause follows) is one of the most common Grammatical Range errors at Band 6.

This lesson builds both families side by side, because essays almost always need them together: you present the opposing view (**contrast**), then explain the reasoning behind your own (**cause & effect**) — often in the same paragraph.

FAMILY 1 Conjunctions of contrast

Contrast words link two ideas that pull against each other. All of them mean roughly the same thing, but each one demands a different kind of language after it:

- A + **a clause** (subject + verb): *although, even though, while, whereas*. These sit at the start or in the middle of one sentence, joining two clauses.
- B + **a noun phrase or gerund**: *despite, in spite of*. These are prepositions — never followed directly by a subject and verb.
- C **Sentence connector**: *however, nevertheless, on the other hand*. These open a **new sentence** (after a full stop or semicolon), followed by a comma.

TWO IDEAS

“Online learning is flexible.” / “Many students miss the social side of a classroom.”

A — CONJUNCTION + CLAUSE

“**Although** online learning is flexible, many students miss the social side of a classroom.”

B — PREPOSITION + NOUN PHRASE

“**Despite** its flexibility, many students miss the social side of a classroom.”

C — SENTENCE CONNECTOR

“Online learning is flexible. **However**, many students miss the social side of a classroom.”

A joins one sentence: Although + clause, clause

B needs a noun: flexible → its flexibility

C starts a new sentence: full stop, However, comma

“A variety of complex structures is used with some flexibility and accuracy, and error-free sentences are frequent — though a few grammar errors may still occur without blocking meaning.”

— IELTS Writing Key Assessment Criteria, Grammatical Range & Accuracy, Band 7 (paraphrased)

EXERCISE 1 · SORT THE CONTRAST WORD

8 MARKS

Tick **one** box for each word: what follows it — a **clause** (subject + verb), a **noun phrase / gerund**, or is it a **sentence connector** that starts a new sentence?

#	Word or phrase	+ Clause	+ Noun / gerund	Sentence connector
1	Although	☐	☐	☐
2	Despite	☐	☐	☐
3	However	☐	☐	☐
4	Whereas	☐	☐	☐
5	Nevertheless	☐	☐	☐
6	In spite of	☐	☐	☐
7	On the other hand	☐	☐	☐
8	Even though	☐	☐	☐

FAMILY 2 Conjunctions of cause & effect

Cause and effect words follow the **same three-way split** as contrast — only the meaning changes, from “these ideas pull against each other” to “one idea produces the other”.

- A + a clause:** *because, since, as*. Join two clauses in one sentence — the reason, then the result (or the other way round).
- B + a noun phrase or gerund:** *due to, owing to, because of*. Prepositions, never followed by a subject and verb.
- C Sentence connector:** *therefore, consequently, as a result, thus*. Open a new sentence, followed by a comma, and state the result of what came before.

TWO IDEAS

“Public transport in the city is unreliable.” / “Many commuters choose to drive to work.”

A — CONJUNCTION + CLAUSE

“**Because** public transport in the city is unreliable, many commuters choose to drive to work.”

B — PREPOSITION + NOUN PHRASE

“**Owing to** unreliable public transport, many commuters choose to drive to work.”

C — SENTENCE CONNECTOR

“Public transport in the city is unreliable. **As a result**, many commuters choose to drive to work.”

A joins one sentence: Because + clause, clause

B needs a noun: is unreliable → unreliable public transport

C starts a new sentence: full stop, As a result, comma

Look at what comes **after the gap** — a clause or a noun phrase — and at the **meaning**, then **circle the letter** of the option that fits both.

9. “___ the exam was difficult, most students passed.”

- (A) Although
- (B) Despite
- (C) Because

10. “Sales fell sharply ___ the rise in fuel prices.”

- (A) because
- (B) while
- (C) due to

11. “___ its high cost, private tuition remains popular among families on modest incomes.”

- (A) Because
- (B) Despite
- (C) Due to

12. “The company invested heavily in research; ___, it launched three new products last year.”

- (A) despite
- (B) whereas
- (C) as a result

ACCURACY Correct, wrong construction, or wrong meaning?

At Band 6 and below, examiners see the same two mistakes again and again: a conjunction paired with the wrong kind of language after it (**wrong construction**), or a connector that states the wrong logical relationship altogether (**wrong meaning**) — using *as a result* where the ideas actually contradict, for instance. Both cost marks under Grammatical Range & Accuracy even when every individual word is spelled correctly.

WRONG CONSTRUCTION “Despite the traffic was terrible, we arrived on time.”

Despite is a preposition — it cannot be followed by a clause (“the traffic was terrible” has a subject and a verb). Fix it two ways: **Despite the terrible traffic**, we arrived on time. / **Although** the traffic was terrible, we arrived on time.

WRONG MEANING “The film received poor reviews; as a result, it became a huge box-office success.”

The two ideas **contradict** each other — poor reviews did not cause the success. This needs a contrast connector: “The film received poor reviews; **however**, it became a huge box-office success.”

EXERCISE 3 · CORRECT, WRONG CONSTRUCTION, OR WRONG MEANING?

8 MARKS

For each sentence, tick **one** box: is it **correct**, does it use a **wrong construction** (the word is followed by the wrong kind of language), or does it state the **wrong meaning** (the logical relationship is backwards)? Then write a corrected version of each faulty

sentence on the lines below.

#	Sentence	Correct	Wrong construction	Wrong meaning
13	Although the traffic was terrible, we arrived on time.	☐	☐	☐
14	Despite the traffic was terrible, we arrived on time.	☐	☐	☐
15	The film received poor reviews; as a result, it became a huge box-office success.	☐	☐	☐
16	Because of it rained heavily, the match was cancelled.	☐	☐	☐
17	The city built a new stadium; however, ticket prices remain unaffordable for many families.	☐	☐	☐
18	The new recycling scheme was expensive to run; nevertheless, the council decided to abandon it.	☐	☐	☐
19	Whereas the rise in tuition fees, university enrolment has increased.	☐	☐	☐
20	Since the government raised the minimum wage, small businesses have struggled to cover costs.	☐	☐	☐

CORRECTIONS (NUMBER EACH ONE)

EXERCISE 4 · JOIN THE IDEAS THREE WAYS

WRITING

Join each pair of ideas **three times**: once with a conjunction + clause (A), once with a preposition + noun phrase (B), and once as two sentences with a connector (C). You will have to change the wording to make B work — that is the point of the exercise.

PAIR 1 · CONTRAST

“Electric cars are expensive.” / “Sales are rising quickly.”

PAIR 2 · CAUSE & EFFECT

“The city centre is heavily polluted.” / “Many families have moved to the suburbs.”

CHECK YOUR OWN WRITING BEFORE YOU LOOK AT THE KEY

- ☐ Sentence A has a subject and a verb on *both* sides of the conjunction.
- ☐ Sentence B has *no* subject+verb after the preposition — you turned the idea into a noun phrase.
- ☐ Sentence C is two separate sentences (or a semicolon), with a comma after the connector.
- ☐ All three say the same thing — you have not accidentally swapped contrast for cause.
- ☐ You used a different word in each of the six sentences.

ANSWER KEY — TURN THE PAGE UPSIDE DOWN TO READ

18 Wrong meaning. Abandoning the scheme is exactly what its high cost would lead you to expect, so the ideas do not contrast. Fix: "...expensive to run; <i>therefore</i>, the council decided to abandon it." 19 Wrong construction. <i>Whereas</i> needs a full clause on each side. Fix: "Whereas tuition fees have risen, university enrolment has increased." 20 Correct. <i>Since</i> + clause, expressing a genuine cause-and-effect relationship. EXERCISE 4 — MODEL ANSWERS Pair 1 (contrast). A: "Although electric cars are expensive, sales are rising quickly." B: "Despite their high price, sales of electric cars are rising quickly." C: "Electric cars are expensive. Nevertheless, sales are rising quickly." Pair 2 (cause & effect). A: "Because the city centre is heavily polluted, many families have moved to the suburbs." B: "Owing to heavy pollution in the city centre, many families have moved to the suburbs." C: "The city centre is heavily polluted. As a result, many families have moved to the suburbs." Your wording will differ — what matters is that B contains no subject+verb after the preposition, and that all three sentences keep the same logical relationship.	10 C (due to). "The rise in fuel prices" is a noun phrase, so it needs a preposition. <i>Because</i> needs a clause ("because fuel prices rose"); <i>while</i> gives the wrong meaning. 11 B (Despite). The idea is a contrast (high cost, yet still popular with families who can least afford it), and "its high cost" is a noun phrase — <i>despite</i> fits both. <i>Because</i> needs a clause; <i>due to</i> gives the wrong meaning. 12 C (as a result). The second idea is a consequence of the first, and the semicolon-plus-comma pattern needs a connector. <i>Despite</i> gives the wrong meaning; <i>whereas</i> is a clause-conjunction and cannot fill a connector slot. EXERCISE 3 — JUDGE THE SENTENCE 13 Correct. <i>Although</i> + clause, and logically a contrast. 14 Wrong construction. <i>Despite</i> cannot take a clause. Fix: "Despite the terrible traffic, we arrived on time" or "Although the traffic was terrible..." 15 Wrong meaning. The ideas contradict rather than one causing the other. Fix: "...poor reviews; <i>however</i>, it became a huge box-office success." 16 Wrong construction. <i>Because of</i> needs a noun phrase. Fix: "Because it rained heavily..." or "Because of the heavy rain..." 17 Correct. A correctly punctuated connector introducing a genuine contrast.	1 + Clause. Followed by a subject and verb: <i>Although the exam was hard...</i> 2 + Noun / gerund. A preposition — must be followed by a noun phrase or an -ing form, never a clause. 3 Sentence connector. Opens a new sentence (after a full stop or semicolon), followed by a comma. 4 + Clause. Joins two clauses within one sentence, usually comparing two groups. 5 Sentence connector. A more formal connector with the same job as <i>however</i> — new sentence, then a comma. 6 + Noun / gerund. Means exactly the same as <i>despite</i> and follows the same rule. 7 Sentence connector. A connector phrase introducing a contrasting point as its own sentence. 8 + Clause. Same family as <i>although</i> — needs a full clause after it. EXERCISE 2 — CHOOSE THE CORRECT WORD 9 A (Although). A clause follows the gap, so it needs a clause-conjunction. <i>Despite</i> would need a noun phrase ("despite the difficulty"); <i>because</i> gives the wrong meaning (cause, not contrast).
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