

Sentence Development Tutorial:

Tutorial # 20:
The Concessive Sentence

Writing Center

English 800 Center

All notes and exercises should be done on separate sheets of paper, which you will bring to your conference with an instructor in the center.

As you work through the tutorial, make sure to see an instructional aide at the front desk in the Writing Center or English 800 Center if you have any questions or difficulties.

The Concessive Sentence

Concessive sentences are useful, in part, because they enable you to combine sentences and avoid “choppiness” in your writing.

But concessive sentences are particularly useful when writing an essay that requires you to compare or contrast two or more things, or an essay that requires you to take a stand on a particular issue, such as an argument or position paper. In these essays, you might want to use concession words **to admit or concede that some of your opponents’ ideas are true**. The most important function of concessives is that they show more than one side of a complex issue while emphasizing the one that you think is most important.

To get a sense of how this might work, consider the following sentence that your professor might write at the end of your essay:

- Although your essay makes many interesting points, your grammar is often flawed.

Your professor has used *although* to concede a point. You probably aren’t expecting to get a very good grade on this one; after all, your grammar is flawed. But suppose the sentence was written:

- Although your grammar is often flawed, your essay makes many interesting points.

Sounds better, doesn’t it? You might even get a good grade. And yet both sentences make the exact same points. The concessive sentence allows you to emphasize *the second point*, by using *concessive subordinators*.

Different subordinators are discussed in more detail in the Writing Center Tutorial 10: “Joining Ideas: Using Coordinators and Subordinators.” We recommend this tutorial if you would like more practice using a variety of different words to join ideas and show relationships.

Some Concessive Subordinators

When writers concede a point, they acknowledge that such a point has merit. It is often necessary, when arguing a position, to make “concessions” to the other side of the idea we are trying to persuade our reader to reject. Many subordinators allow them to show concession. These concessive subordinators are particularly effective in both comparison and contrast and argument essays. They allow the writer to concede that an opponent’s point has value while also de-emphasizing the opponent’s point to the reader.

In each case below, the concessive subordinator shows concession and *de-emphasizes* the point it is attached to; in other words, the point that follows the joining word seems less important.

Although

- *Although Los Angeles has a high crime rate*, many people are attracted to its sunny, warm climate.
(“Although” de-emphasizes the crime rate and allows the writer to emphasize the warm climate.)
- *Although many people are attracted to Los Angeles’ warm climate*, it has a high crime rate.
(“Although” de-emphasizes the warm climate and allows the writer to emphasize the crime rate.)

Even though

- *Even though Los Angeles is one of the smoggiest cities in America*, many famous movie stars and musicians live there.
(“Even though” de-emphasizes the smog.)
- *Even though many famous movie stars and musicians live there*, Los Angeles is one of the smoggiest cities in America.
(“Even though” de-emphasizes the famous people who live there.)

Though

- *Though my new Hummer only gets eight miles to the gallon*, it makes me feel like a big, powerful person.
(“Though” de-emphasizes the low gas mileage.)
- *Though my new Hummer makes me feel like a big, powerful person*, it only gets eight miles to the gallon.
(“Though” de-emphasizes the writer’s feeling of being big and powerful.)

Note: The most effective concession subordinators are **although**, **even though**, and **though**. When you want to express an idea that you choose to de-emphasize or make less important, use one of these.

You might also use *while* or *whereas* when contrasting two ideas. But these words are not as effective in showing concession as they are in comparing and contrasting two ideas.

While

- *While UFO conspiracy theorists don't get much respect, they have a lot of fun.*
(“While” de-emphasizes the lack of respect.)
- *While UFO conspiracy theorists have a lot of fun, they don't get much respect.*
(“While” de-emphasizes the fun that UFO conspiracy theorists have.)

Whereas

- *Whereas experiments on animals provide valuable information about the dynamics of drug addiction and withdrawal, they cause the monkeys to suffer and die.*
(“Whereas” de-emphasizes the valuable information.)
- *Whereas experiments on animals cause monkeys to suffer and die, they provide valuable information about the dynamics of drug addiction and withdrawal.*
(“Whereas” de-emphasizes the suffering and dying of monkeys.)

Notice that in all of these examples, the idea that follows the subordinator gets de-emphasized and the second part of the sentence is emphasized. It might help to think of this as “getting the last word.” While the subordinator tends to play down the sentence following it, the part of the sentence that comes after the subordinate clause gets the last word and seems more important. This is especially true when using the strongest concessive subordinators **although, even though, and though**.

Exercise 1

Instructions: Combine each of the sentences below with a concessive subordinator to emphasize one or the other side as indicated in italics. The first one has been done for you.

1. The Golden State Warriors have not always been a great basketball team. They are having a good season this year.
 - a. Use “*even though*” to *de-emphasize how well they are doing this year and to emphasize they haven’t always been a great team.*
Even though the Golden State Warriors are having a good season this year, they have not always been a great basketball team.
 - b. Use “*even though*” to *de-emphasize the Warriors’ not having always been great and to emphasize how well they are doing this year.*
Even though the Golden State Warriors have not always been a great basketball team, they are having a good season this year.

1. The Hummer is a dangerous and gas-guzzling car. People are buying them as fast as GM can produce them.
 - a. Use “*although*” to *de-emphasize the Hummer’s bad qualities and to emphasize the popularity of the car:*
 - b. Use “*although*” to *de-emphasize the popularity of the Hummer and to emphasize the car’s bad qualities:*
2. The digital church bells at CSM produce lovely music. Some students find them distracting.
 - a. Use “*though*” to *de-emphasize the lovely music and to emphasize that some people find the bells distracting:*
 - b. Use “*though*” to *de-emphasize the bells are distracting and to emphasize that the bells produce lovely music:*
3. I had a lot of fun watching the entire “Star Wars” series on DVD. I didn’t learn anything new about astronomy or history.
 - a. Use “*even though*” to *de-emphasize not learning anything and to emphasize having fun:*
 - b. Use “*even though*” to *de-emphasize having fun and to emphasize not learning anything:*
4. The job market is in a slump right now. It tends to change very quickly and may improve soon.
 - a. Use any concessive subordinator to *de-emphasize the slump:*
 - b. Use any concessive subordinator to *de-emphasize the improvement that is coming soon:*

5. Alfonso is frequently late for work. He does an excellent job with everything he is assigned.
 - a. *Use any concessive subordinator to de-emphasize the quality of Alfonso's work:*
 - b. *Use any concessive subordinator to de-emphasize Alfonso's tardiness for work:*

Exercise 2

Instructions: Imagine you are a skilled computer programmer considering two potential job offers, both of which pay roughly the same. Each job has its advantages and disadvantages, and you must consider these in deciding which to accept. For each numbered item below, show concession to emphasize a good point of one or the other job.

1. Systems Go is a ten-minute drive from home. Business Machines is within walking distance.
 - a. *Emphasize the advantage of Business Machines using any concessive subordinator:*
 - b. *Emphasize the advantage of Systems Go using any concessive subordinator:*
2. Systems Go offers help to employees buying a first home. Business Machines is closer to less expensive housing.
 - a. *Emphasize the advantage of Systems Go using any concessive subordinator:*
 - b. *Emphasize the advantage of Business Machines using any concessive subordinator:*
3. Systems Go is close to many downtown restaurants. Business Machines has a great cafeteria.
 - a. *Emphasize the advantage of Business Machines using any concessive subordinator:*
 - b. *Emphasize the advantage of Systems Go using any concessive subordinator:*
4. Systems Go has a great gym with Nautilus equipment. Business Machines has an indoor pool.
 - a. *Emphasize the advantage of Systems Go using any concessive subordinator:*
 - b. *Emphasize the advantage of Business Machines using any concessive subordinator:*
5. Business Machines has a low turnover rate. Most employees at Systems Go say they are happy with their jobs.
 - a. *Emphasize the advantage of Business Machines using any concessive subordinator:*
 - b. *Emphasize the advantage of Systems Go using any concessive subordinator:*

Exercise 3

Instructions:

1. Review a classroom essay that you are working on and try to incorporate concessive sentences into your own writing.
2. Look back at the principles and exercises in this tutorial and make notes on a separate sheet of paper. You will bring these notes and the essay to your conference.
3. Make an appointment for a conference with an instructor in the Writing Center (18-104) or English 800 Center (18-102). To make this appointment, stop by the Centers or call (650) 574-6436. During this appointment, the professor will make sure you understand the concepts covered in this tutorial, answer any questions that you might have, review your answers to these exercises, and check to see if you can incorporate the skill into your writing.

Reminder:

For this appointment, bring

- any notes about the tutorial that you have taken
- your completed tutorial exercises
- and the essay