

Contrast linkers

English B2

What this topic teaches

Contrast is the soul of argument . English has a whole shelf of linkers that disagree politely, and they follow **different grammar rules** – which is why this is a B2 topic and not a vocabulary list.

- *Although it rained, we played.* (clause after *although*)
- *Despite the rain, we played.* (a **noun** after *despite*)
- *It rained. **However**, we played.* (a new sentence)
- Memory hook: the linkers are colleagues with the same job – contrast – but different tools. Learn the tool, not just the word.

The clause team: although, though, even though, whereas, while

These take a full clause (subject + verb).

- **Although** *it rained, we played.* – the standard.
- **Though** is the informal twin: same grammar, warmer sound. It can even float to the end: *It rained. We played, **though**.*
- **Even though** is *although* with emphasis : *Even though the test was brutal , everyone passed.*
- **Whereas** / **while** compare two facts side by side: *I like coffee, **whereas** my sister likes tea.* – contrast without surprise, just difference.

The noun team: despite, in spite of

These take a **noun** or **-ing**, never a full clause.

- *Despite **the rain**, we played.* / *In spite of **being tired**, she kept working.*
- $\triangle$ “*Despite it rained*” $\times$ – a clause needs *although*. “*Despite of*” $\times$ – *despite* needs no *of*; *in spite of* hoards them both.
- $\triangle$ Want a clause anyway? Add *the fact that*: *Despite **the fact that** it rained, we played.* Heavy but legal – the footballer of linkers.

The sentence team: however, nevertheless, on the other hand

These start a **new sentence**, usually with a comma.

- *The test was brutal. **However**, everyone passed.*
- *The hotel was expensive. **Nevertheless**, we stayed.* (formal, slightly heroic)

- *Noodles are cheap. **On the other hand**, the canteen’s are a crime.*
- $\triangle$ *However* is not *but*: “*It rained, however, we played*” $\times$ – that’s a comma splice . *However* needs a full stop or semicolon before it: *It rained**. H***owever*, we played.*

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- $\triangle$... **has no English twin.** “*Although it rained, but we played*” $\times$ – one linker per contrast, the same rule as *because/so* from A2. The old traps never die; they just get taller.
- $\triangle$ **Match the tool to the grammar.** Clause $\rightarrow$ *although*. Noun $\rightarrow$ *despite*. New sentence $\rightarrow$ *however*. The meaning is identical; the grammar is the exam.
- $\triangle$ ***despite* and *in spite of* are not “despite of”.** The *of* belongs to *in spite of* alone. They share a shelf, not a toolbox.
- $\triangle$ ***while* wears two hats.** Contrast: *I like tea, while she likes coffee.* Time: *While I was cooking, the phone rang.* The sentence tells you which hat; context is the mirror.

Say it aloud

Argue with yourself, politely, in three tools.

- Although I love noodles, I should eat less of them. Despite loving noodles, I should eat less. I love noodles. However, I should eat less.
- Whereas my brother studies at midnight, I study at dawn . We meet at breakfast, both wrong.
- It rained on the school trip. Nevertheless, we sang. The rain had no answer to that.

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. ____ *it rained, we played.* (clause) – **Although** / **Even though**. A clause takes the clause team.
2. ____ *the rain, we played.* (noun) – **Despite** / **In spite of**. A noun takes the noun team.
3. *It rained.* ____, *we played.* (new sentence) – **However**. The sentence team, with its comma.
4. “*Although it rained, but we played.*” – $\times \rightarrow$ **drop the but**. One linker per contrast.
5. *I like coffee,* ____ *my sister likes tea.* (side-by-side difference) – **whereas** / **while**. Contrast without surprise.