

Sentence Development Tutorial

Tutorial 20: **The Concessive Sentence**

This Tutorial includes two files:

- **Lesson (20a_The_Concessive_Sentence_Lesson)**

In order to learn the material presented in this tutorial more effectively, as you read you should take notes in a place that you can reference later. If it is convenient, you could print the tutorial and annotate it so you can keep it for future reference.

- **Exercises (20b_The_Concessive_Sentence_Exercises)** – located in the same area as the lesson)

- It has highlighted areas for you to answer the exercises using an application such as Adobe Acrobat Reader.
- Download and save this file as your own; you will share it with an instructor after you complete the lesson and exercises.

Please contact the Writing Center with any questions or difficulties:

csmtwc@smccd.edu or 650-574-6436.

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**.

Please open your 20b exercises file and complete Exercises 1 and 2.

Final Activity

Instructions:

1. Review a classroom essay that you are working on and try to incorporate concessive sentences into your own writing.
2. Make an appointment for a conference with an instructor working in the Writing Center. To make this appointment, sign up using the same method you use to make essay conference appointments. Be sure to include a comment or note that you are meeting about a tutorial.
3. During this appointment, the instructor will make sure you understand the concepts covered in this tutorial, answer any questions that you might have, review your answers to the exercises, and check to see if you can incorporate the skill into your writing.