CHAPTER 7
CONJUNCTIONS

A conjunction is a word that joins other words, phrases, parts of sentences, or sentences together.

Common Conjunctions:

and
: Usually joins two positive or two negative ideas.

but
: Used to connect two opposing statements.

or
: Provides a choice between ideas.

so
: Demonstrates an effect or a result, similar to *then* in an **`if/then`** statement.

Transforming Conjunctions into Simple Sentences

Conjunctions are an important part of effective writing, but they add complexity to sentence structure. When writing technical documentation, analyze whether a conjunction makes a sentence more or less clear than two separate statements.

This sentence can be understood, eventually, but it's confusing:

Foo2Bar is a framework that makes it easy to create application images, and takes application source code as an input, and produces a new image that runs the assembled application in an isolated sandbox.

See how much clearer it is when written as three separate sentences:

Foo2Bar is a framework that makes it easy to create application images. It takes application source code to produce an executable image. Foo2Bar images run in an isolated sandbox for increased security.

Another example:

To distribute your modifications, gather the configuration files, documentation files, all build materials, including build scripts and scripts needed to dynamically generate makefiles, and compiled binaries, and create a tar archive, or use the **`foopkg`** command on the parent directory.

This becomes much clearer when rewritten with fewer conjunctions:

There are two ways to distribute your modifications. You can create a tar archive manually or you can use the **`foopkg`** command. For each, you must include all compiled binaries, configuration files, documentation, build scripts, and scripts to dynamically generate makefiles.

Choosing the Right Conjunctions

Sometimes conjunctions are the right choice, and in those cases you must choose the correct conjunction.

But

The *but* conjunction is very inflexible. It is appropriate when the two statements being connected are exclusive of one another, These two examples have very different meanings:

A car can drive but it cannot fly.

Most importantly, *but* implies that two statements are opposed even if they are not. Using *but* incorrectly confuses readers. For example, if you write:

Linux is open source but it is a stable, Enterprise-ready platform.

A reader probably interprets it to mean that Linux is Enterprise-ready *in spite of* it being open source. What you actually mean is that Linux is *both* open source and Enterprise-ready.

Linux is open source and is a stable, Enterprise-ready platform.

And

The *and* conjunction connects two equally true or equally false statements into one:

That hat is not red and it is not mine.

This fedora is red and it is mine.

Or

The *or* conjunction implies a choice between the two statements it connects:

Run the **DHCP** daemon embedded on the router or run your own on a server.

In the preceding statement, it's significant that you can use either the embedded DHCP server or your own, because using both could cause conflicts severe enough to bring down your network. It would be inaccurate to use a different conjunction:

Run the **DHCP** daemon embedded on the router and run your own on a server.

In fact, for added emphasis, you can use *either*:

Run either the **DHCP** daemon embedded on the router or run your own on a server.

So

The *so* conjunction connects causes and effects:

Red Hat Enterprise Linux 7 is the latest release. This server is running Red Hat Enterprise Linux 6, so it needs to be updated.

This server is not running firewalld or SELinux, so it does not pass my security audit.

Exercise

Practice using the correct conjunction, or rewrite to use no conjunction:

1. Linux is an excellent platform for development, but it is an excellent platform for deployment.

2. Security-enhanced Linux (SELinux) is an implementation of a mandatory access control mechanism in the Linux kernel. It is an important part of system security. Do not disable SELinux, so use the **`setenforce`** command to put SELinux into permissive mode temporarily.

3. Click the **OK** button to proceed to the next screen, and then click the **Name** link in the upper-left corner of the page or the **Name** selection in the **Navigation** drop-down menu in the upper-right corner of the page, and click the **arrow** icon to continue.