Joining Two Main Clauses:

Note: The following description of compound sentences builds off of the linked discussion of [main clauses](#). That page addresses the placement of such fundamental elements of word order as [the predicate](#), [subject](#), [direct and indirect objects](#), [the "mid-field,"](#) [negations](#), and ["non-elements."](#) This particular page deals only with the ways in which main (or "independent") clauses can be combined within the same sentence.

Again, people who would prefer to follow a more mechanical - but ultimately less complete - set of rules for word order in general would be better served by linking to these [prescriptive instructions for German word order](#). Both sites overlap considerably.

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Both English and German allow speakers to combine two or more main clauses within a single sentence. Being placed side-by-side within a grammatical unit, they of course ought to bear a logical relationship to one another, but of a different sort from what exists between a main clause and a [dependent](#) one. The connection between the two main clauses can be expressed by means of a coordinating conjunction, an adverb, or simply by proximity.

In English, clauses that are tied together by a coordinating conjunction must be separated by a comma. If there is no such conjunction, the separator must be a semi-colon (or sometimes a colon); a comma would produce a "run-on sentence," which is a grammatical no-no:

> He took a taxi home, and so did I.
> He went right to bed, but I did not.
> He went right to bed; I did not.
> I went through my usual routine: I drank a glass of warm milk.

In some regards, compound sentences are just a writing convention. Usually, little is lost or gained by presenting the two independent clauses as two distinct sentences (Some representatives of the grammar police frown on starting a sentence with a coordinating conjunction like *and* or *but*, but they are losing that battle. And so they should).

Compounding sentences in German (das Satzgefüge)

The process for combining clauses is similar to that in English, except that a comma can be a permitted divider.

Coordinating conjunctions are the most frequent way to link the independent clauses that are part of a compound sentence. The most common are *und*, *aber*, *oder*, *sondern*, and *denn*. They do not affect the word order of the clause that they introduce (i.e., they do not occupy the first position):

The conjunction **und** connects two clauses, of which the second either adds related information or is a result of the first:

Sie wollte ihre Eltern besuchen, und ich bin mitgegangen.
She wanted to visit her parents, and I went along.

Du hast das bestellt, und jetzt musst du es essen.
You ordered that, and now you have to eat it.

The conjunction **aber** introduces a clause that contrasts with the one before it:

Sie war auch im Kino, aber ich habe sie nicht gesehen.
She was also at the movies, but I didn't see her.

Er wollte das Fußballspiel sehen, aber sie wollte lieber in die Oper.
He wanted to see the soccer game, but she preferred to go to the opera.

The conjunction **oder** introduces a clause that presents an alternative to the one before it:

Wir können es mitnehmen, oder wir können es hier essen.
We can take it along, or we can eat it here.

Du kannst mir das Geld gleich geben, oder du kannst später bezahlen.
You can give me the money right away, or you can pay later.

The conjunction **sondern** introduces a clause that presents the opposite of negative that preceded it:

Er wohnt nicht mehr in der Stadt, sondern er ist aufs Land gezogen.
He doesn't live in the city any more, but rather he has moved to the country.

The conjunction **denn** is a bit unusual. It's meaning, "because," would seem to suggest a [subordinating conjunction](#), like "weil," but grammatically it does not behave that way:

Er wollte nicht mitkommen, denn heute Nacht hatte er schlecht geschlafen.
He didn't want to come along, because he had slept badly last night.

Consistent with its status as a coordinating conjunction, *denn* cannot introduce the first clause of a compound sentence, the way that a [subordinating conjunction](#) can:

Weil sie kein Geld bei sich hatte, musste ich bezahlen.
Because she had no money with her, I had to pay.

With **denn**, the only permitted sequence would be:

Ich musste bezahlen, denn sie hatte kein Geld bei sich.

Clauses can also be paired without an intervening conjunction, separated by only a comma - or a colon or semicolon. This news story provides two compound sentences: the first without a conjunction, the second with *aber*:

Deutschland ist für Twitter wichtig, zufrieden ist das Unternehmen aber nicht. Die Nutzerzahl steigt, aber es fehlt an Erlösen.

Germany is important to Twitter[;] the company is not satisfied, however. The number of users is climbing, but there is a lack of revenue.

Here is another, similar example:

Russland ist in der Ukraine zu imperialer Politik zurückgekehrt, Amerikas Position gegenüber Moskau verhärtet sich - und der Gewinner könnte Assad sein.

Russia has returned to imperialistic politics in Ukraine[;] America's position vis-à-vis Moscow has hardened - and Assad could be the winner.

And here is a case in which a colon both separates and indicates the causal relationship between the two clauses:

Viele Anwohner begrüßen die Einführung der neuen Parkzonen: Autofahrer müssen vom 1. Juni an östlich und westlich der Warschauer Straße Gebühren zahlen.

Many neighborhood residents welcome the introduction of the new parking zones: starting June 1st, drivers must pay a fee on the east and west sides of Warsaw Street.

In the three examples above, each of the clauses separated by the commas could convincingly stand alone. But some pairings of clauses with just a comma between them can imply a missing subordinating conjunction, notably *dass*. Each part of the compound sentence is "independent" from a grammatical perspective, but logically the second clause is an object of the first and gives it meaning. In contrast to a statement like *"Deutschland ist für Twitter wichtig"*, the clauses *"er sagte"* and *"ich weiß"* don't seem very complete without the addition of what follows them:

Er sagte, er wollte uns helfen. *He said he wanted to help us.*
Ich weiß, du hast nichts Böses gemeint. *I know you didn't mean anything bad.*
Ich habe schon gesagt, du kannst mit uns fahren.   *I already said, you can ride with us.*

So-called **adverbial connectors** can supplement the juxtaposition of the paired clauses. Such words may or may not begin the second clause, but they indicate its relationship to the first:

Er hat alles auf's falsche Pferd gesetzt, deshalb kann er er die Miete nicht bezahlen.
He bet everything on the wrong horse; that's why he can't pay the rent.

Sie ist nicht sehr zuverlässig, wir lieben sie trotzdem.
She's not very dependable; we love her anyway.

Auf leerem Magen war es schwer, mich auf die Rede zu konzentrieren, ich habe erst danach etwas zu essen bekommen.
On an empty stomach I found it hard to concentrate on the speech; I didn't get anything to eat until afterwards.

Jede Genehmigung solle einzeln geprüft werden, dabei würden die örtlichen Gegebenheiten berücksichtigt.

Every approval should be examined individually; in the process the local circumstances would be taken into consideration.