

Grammar Reference

Linking devices of cause and effect

Meaning and use

Linking devices are used to link one idea or argument to another. A common situation is when we are talking about something that happens and its result, or a **cause** and its **effect**.

[CAUSE] *The population has increased.* [EFFECT] *The government is going to build more houses.*

Group 1: Therefore, consequently, as a result, thus

Form

These are also called **conjunctive adverbs**, and they all behave in the same way. This is how we use **consequently** to join two ideas together. Notice the comma after **consequently**:

*The population has increased. **Consequently**, the government is going to build more houses.*

Or we could join the two sentences together using a **semi-colon + consequently + comma**:

*The population has increased; **consequently**, the government is going to build more houses.*

But you **can't** just add **consequently** without a semi-colon or comma. This is wrong:

*The population has increased **consequently** the government is going to build more houses.*

We can also replace **consequently** with any of the **Group 1** words or phrases:

*The population has increased. **As a result**, the government is going to build more houses.*

*The population has increased; **therefore**, the government is going to build more houses.*

Note

Therefore and **consequently** are used mainly in writing or formal speech. **Thus** is a little old-fashioned but is sometimes used in academic writing. **That's why** is very common in informal speech. In writing, we usually use it at the beginning of a sentence.

*The traffic was terrible. **That's why** I'm late.*

Group 2: because of, as a result of, due to, owing to

Noun phrases and participle clauses

With Group 2 linking devices, the **cause** part is not a whole sentence or clause, it's a **noun phrase** (a phrase that behaves like a noun) or **participle clause** (a short phrase that begins with a verb, usually in the **-ing form**):

interest rate rises (noun phrase)

rising interest rates (participle clause)

Form

Let's imagine a **cause and effect** situation: interest rate rises are the **cause** of price increases. This is one way we could connect them using **owing to**:

*The problem has increased **owing to interest rate rises**.*

*The problem has increased **owing to rising interest rates**.*

In Group 1, the **linking device** usually comes **between** the **cause** and **effect** parts. **Cause** is always first, and **effect** is second.

With Group 2, the **cause** can come first or second, and the **linking device** moves with it. Notice that you need a comma after the **linking device** if it's in the first part of the sentence.

***As a result of interest rate rises**, the problem has increased.*

*The problem has increased **as a result of interest rate rises**.*

Take note: The fact that

We can use a **group 2 phrase + the fact that + a verb phrase**:

*The problem has increased **owing to the fact that interest rates are rising**.*

Take note: as a result and as a result of

As a result is in Group 1, and **as a result of** is in Group 2! They look very similar but behave differently.

Pronunciation

When you start a sentence with one of these linking devices, your voice starts high and then falls. After **therefore**, **consequently**, **as a result**, **for that reason**, **thus**, you often pause slightly before continuing.