And, But and Or: How Your Child Joins Ideas Together in Year 1

Key points

- Coordinating conjunctions (and, but and or) are little words that join two simple ideas into one longer sentence.
- And adds ideas together (I like cats and I like dogs), but shows a contrast (I like cats but I don't like spiders), and or offers a choice (Would you like tea or juice?).
- Learning to use these words helps Year 1 children write more interesting and detailed sentences.
- Children spot these words first when reading and hearing stories, then gradually use them in their own writing.
- There is no pressure to use all three by the end of Year 1; children develop at different speeds and that is completely normal.

Things to try at home

- Play with sentence strips: write simple sentences on strips of paper (I like apples / They are red), then physically move them together with a word card (and / but / or) between them—children find it fun and concrete.
- Read aloud and listen together: when you spot and, but or or in a picture book or story, pause and ask 'What did that word do?' (joined two ideas / showed something different / gave a choice).
- Play 'Would you rather': ask your child 'Would you like to play outside or inside?' to introduce or in everyday chat, without making it a lesson.
- Make silly sentences together: say a simple sentence and invite your child to add to it with and (I wore socks and a hat and a swimming costume)—laughter makes it stick.
- Hunt for the words: during the day, challenge each other to spot and, but and or in signs, menus or conversations, and say what job each one did.

Find out more

- National Curriculum for English, Key Stage 1: www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum (see Composition and Punctuation)
- Talk to your child's teacher: they can show you what your child is already trying, and suggest what might help next.
- Education Makes Sense: search for more guides on conjunctions and Year 1 writing skills.