

Granting a point and still disagreeing

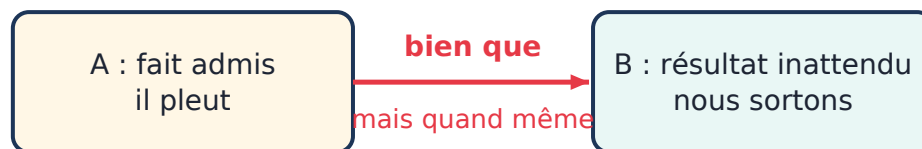
French B2 (upper intermediate) · Lesson

Quick answer: French concession links a granted fact to an unexpected result. Bien que and quoique take the subjunctive, même si takes the indicative, avoir beau takes an infinitive, and certes... mais or il n'empêche que structure a balanced argument in formal writing.

Level: French B2 (CEFR upper intermediate) · **Standards:** CEFR B2, Writing

How do you grant a point and still defend your view in French?

Concession means you admit a fact, then show that the consequence you would expect does not follow. English uses *although*, *even if* or *no matter how much*. French spreads the job over several tools, and each one fixes the form that comes next. In a formal letter or a DELF B2 essay, this is how a writer sounds balanced yet decided.



A devrait bloquer. B montre le contraire.

A concession grants fact A, then states the opposite of what A would suggest.

Tool	Followed by	Example
bien que, quoique	subjunctive	Bien qu'il pleuve, nous sortons. — Although it is raining, we go out.
même si	indicative	Même si elle est fatiguée, elle accepte. — Even if she is tired, she agrees.
avoir beau	infinitive	Il a beau insister, personne ne l'écoute. — However much he insists, nobody listens.
certes... mais	indicative	Certes, le loyer est élevé, mais le quartier est calme. — True, the rent is high, but the area is quiet.
malgré, en dépit de	noun	Malgré la grève, le train est arrivé à l'heure. — Despite the strike, the train arrived on time.

Which mood follows **bien que** and which follows **même si**?

Rule: mood after the connector

Bien que and **quoique** always take the subjunctive, even when the fact is certain. **Même si** takes the indicative and follows the pattern of **si**: present with present or future, imperfect with conditional, pluperfect with past conditional. Never put a conditional right after **même si**.

Examples

- Bien que Karim habite à Rabat depuis dix ans, il hésite encore à négocier au souk. — Although Karim has lived in Rabat for ten years, he still hesitates to bargain at the souk.
- Quoiqu'elle soit débutante, Inès dirige déjà l'équipe. — Although she is a beginner, Inès already leads the team.
- Même si le vol est annulé, nous arriverons demain. — Even if the flight is canceled, we will arrive tomorrow.
- Même si tu les avais prévenus, ils n'auraient rien changé. — Even if you had warned them, they would have changed nothing.

subjunctif
bien que, quoique

indicatif
même si, certes... mais,
il n'empêche que

infinitif
avoir beau + infinitif

nom
malgré, en dépit de

Choose the structure first, then the form follows.

Four families of concession tools sorted by what follows them.

How does **avoir beau** work?

Avoir beau is conjugated, then an infinitive follows. It says that an action is done in vain: the second clause gives the result nobody expected. The subject is normally the same in both clauses.

Examples

- J'ai beau relire le contrat, je ne comprends pas la clause 7. — However many times I reread the contract, I do not understand clause 7.
- Elle avait beau s'excuser, il restait fâché. — She could apologize all she wanted, he stayed angry.

What do certes... mais and il n'empêche que add?

Certes opens the point you grant and mais introduces your own position. Il n'empêche que means *all the same* and takes the indicative: Il est sympathique ; il n'empêche que je ne lui prêterais pas d'argent. — He is likable; all the same, I would not lend him money.

Watch out

English speakers often write bien qu'il est because the fact is true. The fact does not matter, the connector does. Write bien qu'il soit. Also keep quoique (although) apart from quoi que (whatever): Quoi que tu dises, elle ne changera pas d'avis.

Culture note

The DELF B2 written production asks for an argumentative text. French teachers expect a visible concession, usually certes... mais, before the writer's own conclusion.

Zoé's tip

Pick the structure first, then the mood. Ask yourself: would a listener be surprised by my second half? If yes, a concession tool is needed. Bien que means subjunctive every single time, so do not re-think it.

Key points to remember

- Bien que and quoique are always followed by the subjunctive.
- Même si keeps the indicative: imperfect in the clause, conditional in the main clause.
- Avoir beau + infinitive means doing something in vain.
- Quoique (although) is not quoi que (whatever).
- Malgré and en dépit de take a noun, not a clause.

Granting a point and still disagreeing: frequently asked questions

Is bien que followed by the subjunctive or the indicative?

Always the subjunctive, even when the fact is certain. Write bien qu'il soit fatigué, never bien qu'il est fatigué.

What is the difference between même si and bien que?

Même si takes the indicative and treats the fact as a hypothesis or condition. Bien que takes the subjunctive and treats the fact as true but irrelevant to the result.

How do you use avoir beau?

Conjugate avoir, keep beau unchanged, then add an infinitive: j'ai beau chercher. The main clause shows the result you did not expect.

Can you use pourtant with bien que?

Better not. Bien que already contains the concession, so adding pourtant in the same sentence repeats the idea. Use pourtant to link two separate clauses instead.

How do you write a balanced argument with certes?

State the point you grant after certes, then give your own view after mais or cependant. This pattern is expected in DELF B2 writing.