

Linking ideas to build your argument

French 4 (high school) · Lesson

Quick answer: Argument connectors link ideas so a French text reads as logic, not as a list. Use *cependant*, *pourtant* and *en revanche* to contrast, *d'ailleurs* to add a point, *par conséquent* to conclude, and *bien que* (with the subjunctive) for concession. A strong paragraph moves from claim to proof, counterpoint and conclusion.

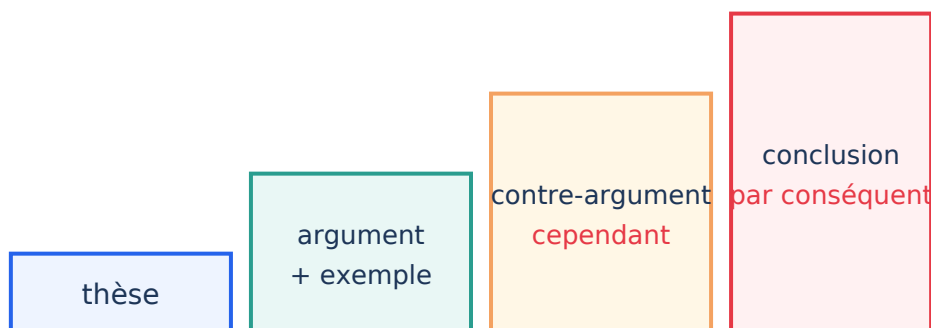
Level: French 4 (high school, ACTFL Intermediate Mid) · **Standards:** ACTFL Intermediate Mid, WL 1.2 Interpretive, WL 1.3 Presentational, WL 4.1 Language Comparisons

Why do connectors matter in an argument?

Imagine a debate in your French club about phones in class. Saying *Les téléphones aident. Ils distraient.* gives two facts but no thinking. Adding a connector shows how the ideas relate: *Les téléphones aident ; cependant, ils distraient.* — Phones help; however, they distract. Connectors are the signposts of a French essay, an AP French presentational task or a spoken opinion. Without them, the reader has to guess whether you agree with yourself; with them, the path from claim to conclusion is easy to follow. Choose each one for its exact job, not because it sounds impressive.

Definition

A *connecteur logique* is a word or phrase that links two ideas and names their relationship: opposition, addition, cause, result or concession.



The staircase of a well-built paragraph.

Which connector fits which job?

Job	Connector	Example
mild contrast	cependant	Ce film est long ; cependant , il est passionnant.
contrast with surprise	pourtant	Il a révisé ; pourtant , il a raté le test.
two sides of a subject	en revanche	Le métro est rapide ; en revanche , il est bondé.
extra argument	d'ailleurs	Je reste ; d'ailleurs , je n'ai pas de billet.
result	par conséquent	Il neige ; par conséquent , les bus sont annulés.

Rule: bien que + subjunctive

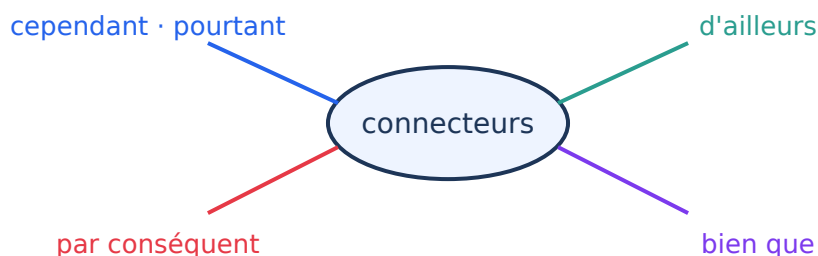
Bien que means *although* and introduces a concession. The verb that follows is always in the subjunctive: être → soit, avoir → ait, faire → fasse, pouvoir → puisse. It is followed by a comma, and the main clause has no mais.

Examples

- **Bien que** le voyage **soit** cher, nous irons à Québec. — Although the trip is expensive, we will go to Québec.
- **Bien qu'**elle **ait** peur, Awa saute dans l'eau. — Although she is scared, Awa jumps in the water.

Common mistakes

English speakers write *Bien que il est tard*. Correct it twice: elide to *bien qu'il* and use the subjunctive, *bien qu'il soit tard*. Also avoid *bien que ... mais* in one sentence, and do not use *par conséquent* where you mean contrast.



Connectors grouped by function.

Culture note

French school essays, the dissertation, traditionally follow a plan of *thèse*, *antithèse* and *synthèse*. Connectors are what make that plan visible to the reader.

Zoé's tip

Before you write a connector, ask: am I adding, opposing or concluding? Choose by function, then check the verb after bien que.

Key points to remember

- Cependant and pourtant both contrast ideas; pourtant stresses surprise, as in 'and yet'.
- En revanche opposes two different sides of one subject: good point, bad point.
- D'ailleurs adds a further argument or an aside; par conséquent introduces a result.
- Bien que is always followed by the subjunctive and is never combined with mais.
- A classic paragraph: claim, example, counter-argument, conclusion.

Linking Ideas to Build Your Argument: frequently asked questions

What is the difference between cependant and pourtant?

Both mean however, but pourtant carries surprise: something happens against expectation, as in Il a révisé ; pourtant, il a échoué. Cependant is a more neutral, formal way of adding a counterpoint.

When do I use en revanche?

Use en revanche to oppose two different aspects of the same topic, usually one good and one bad: La ville est belle ; en revanche, elle est chère. It means on the other hand.

Does bien que take the indicative or the subjunctive?

Always the subjunctive. Write bien qu'il soit tard, not bien qu'il est tard. The main clause that follows should not begin with mais.

Can d'ailleurs start a sentence?

Yes. It adds a supporting argument or an aside and means besides or by the way. It is common in speech and in informal essays.

How many connectors should one paragraph have?

Two or three well-chosen connectors are enough. Choose each one for its job, and avoid repeating the same connector in neighboring sentences.