

What Would You Say to an Alien?

Scientists are sending a message to space. What should it say?

About the Story

Learning Objective: to understand how a writer uses coordinating conjunctions to connect ideas effectively, then compose sentences using coordinating conjunctions

Featured Skill: grammar, usage, and mechanics

Standards:

The article and its suite of support materials support these Common Core anchor standards: L.1, L.2

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.

WRITE LIKE A PRO

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO AN ALIEN?

Scientists are creating a message to send to space, with the hope that it will one day reach an alien civilization. What do you think it should say?

BY REBECCA E.J. HANCOCK

COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Use the coordinating conjunctions to connect ideas effectively. Write a sentence using a coordinating conjunction to connect two ideas.

THOUSANDS OF YEARS

The message will be sent to a region of the galaxy that could support life. But it will take thousands and thousands of years to get there. (It's been 50 years since the Arecibo message was transmitted. If you think about it, the message will take thousands of years to reach its destination for another 25,000 years.) And then, if aliens receive the message, if they figure out what it means, and if they decide to reply, it could take thousands of years for their reply to reach Earth.

Still, it's exciting to think about. Some scientists speculate that any alien civilization that could decode and respond to our message would be technologically advanced. Such a society may have overcome struggles like those we face on Earth, such as war and hunger, says David Whitehouse from the SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) Institute. "Wouldn't it be nice if there were someone who could say 'You can do this, because we've done it'?" she says. "We're looking for a friend."

REACHING FOR THE STARS

The Beacon in the Galaxy won't be the first message broadcast from Earth. In 1974, scientists used a giant radio telescope in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, to send a message to a distant cluster of stars. The message summarized humanity's technological achievements. In 1977, the spacecraft Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 were launched, each carrying records containing sounds and images of human life. How will the Beacon in the Galaxy be different? It will contain more information as well as instructions for how to reply.

WRITE LIKE A PRO CHALLENGE

Now take what you've learned and apply it to your own writing. For each pair of things below, compose a sentence using a coordinating conjunction that shows the relationship between the things.

- cable, pie
- crisping up late, getting up early
- ballerina, dance teacher
- with grade, math

For tips on using commas, see page 31.

30 Scholastic Scope • March 2024

31

Your Teaching Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Text-to-speech

Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Anchor Chart: Coordinating Conjunctions
- In-Magazine Activity: Interactive Version

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

1. Prepare to Read (5 minutes)

- Draw students' attention to the directions in the upper left-hand corner of page 30 or at the top of the digital story page. Read the directions aloud.

2. Read and Discuss (25 minutes)

- Have students read the article and the explanations in the green circles with a partner.
- Optionally, before students complete the **Write Like a Pro Challenge**, give them some extra practice using coordinating conjunctions. Project the following sentences, then have students combine them using coordinating conjunctions.
 - She enjoys painting. She enjoys drawing.
 - The sun was shining brightly. The temperature was still cold.
 - I'd like to travel to Italy. Maybe I'll go to Spain instead.
 - He didn't spend much time studying for the test. He got an A+.
 - She finished her homework early. She decided to go for a walk.
- Optionally, provide students with the **Anchor Chart: Coordinating Conjunctions** to use and keep as a handy reference in their notebooks. It contains definitions and usage examples for each conjunction.
- To teach students about using commas in the sentences they combined, refer to pages 2-3 of the magazine, which explain when a comma is needed before a coordinating conjunction.

3. Write (25 minutes)

- Have students work in pairs or independently to take the **Write Like a Pro Challenge** on page 31 of the printed magazine or at the bottom of the digital story page:

Now take what you've learned and apply it to your own writing! For each pair of things below, compose a sentence using a coordinating conjunction that shows the relationship between the things:

- *cake, pie*
- *staying up late, getting up early*
- *TikTok, dance trends*
- *sixth grade, seventh grade*

Remind students that there are no “right” answers here. They get to come up with the relationships!

- Project students' sentences on your whiteboard and discuss the relationships they created between each pair of words or phrases. Alternatively, have students exchange and discuss their sentences with a partner.