

7 Explanations and Excuses

In this unit, you will ...

- develop paragraphs which explain cause and effect / result.
- combine sentences with *so* and *because*.
- practise further with word maps and freewriting.
- write a paragraph about explanations and excuses.

- 1 Describe this picture to a partner. Guess what the problem is. Tell your partner what you think the people are saying.



- 2 Read the paragraph and check your guess.

It Wasn't My Fault!

¹ Teachers should be understanding when students can't complete assignments on time. ² I couldn't do the writing homework for English class today, and my teacher didn't want to hear my reasons. ³ I had good reasons, too. ⁴ Last night was Evan's birthday. ⁵ He's my best friend, so I had to go to his party. ⁶ After the party, I tried to do the homework, but my computer froze and I lost all the information. ⁷ I was too tired to write it again because it was very late. ⁸ My teacher didn't care. ⁹ She said, 'You had two weeks to do the assignment, so there are no excuses.' ¹⁰ I think she's angry with me, but it wasn't my fault.

- 3** Why didn't the writer do his homework? Write W for the writer's reasons and T for the teacher's reasons.

The writer didn't do his homework because ...

- a. it was his best friend's birthday.
- b. he is lazy.
- c. he isn't organised.
- d. he had a computer problem.
- e. he isn't a serious student.

Language focus: Giving explanations

☞ Cause and effect / result

- *So* and *because* can be used to join two sentences together:

It was raining. I took an umbrella.

It was raining, so I took an umbrella.

I took an umbrella because it was raining.

- *So* and *because* have a similar function.

So tells us the result or effect of a situation:

I took an umbrella.

Because tells us why something happens (the cause):

I took an umbrella. Why? Because it was raining.

- *So* and *because* are often very close in meaning, and you can choose either – but you must use *so* with the result / effect and *because* with the cause:

I had a cold. I didn't go to class.

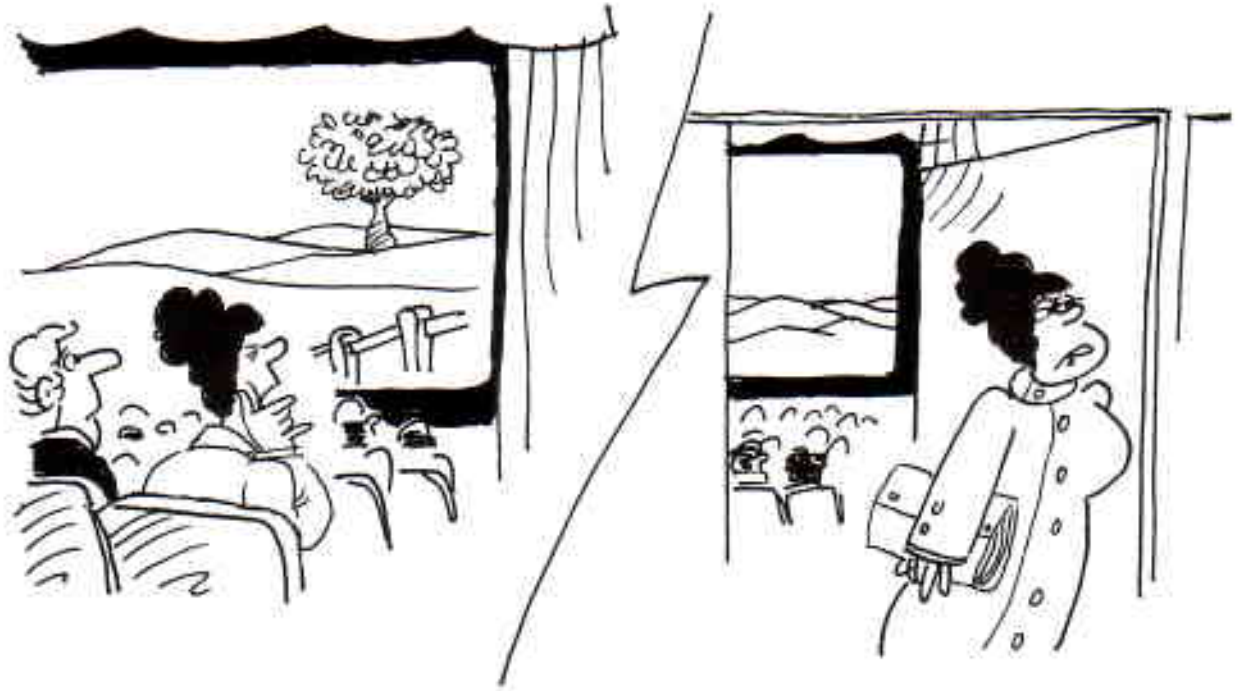
I had a cold, so I didn't go to class.

I didn't go to class because I had a cold.

Note: A comma comes before *so*. There is no comma before *because*.

- 4** Look again at the paragraph on page 48, *It Wasn't My Fault*, and do the following.

- a. Underline the sentences that use *so* or *because*.
- b. For each of those sentences, tell a partner what part of the sentence tells the *cause* and what part tells the *effect / result*.



5 Write a sentence using *so* and another sentence using *because* for these situations.

a. The film was boring. I left early.

The film was boring, so I left early.

I left early because the film was boring.

b. We played badly. We lost the football match.

c. I failed the test. I didn't study hard.

d. My alarm clock didn't work. I was late for the meeting.

e. I am shy. I don't have a girlfriend.

f. I won't go to the party. I'm tired.

Language focus: Starting with because

Look at these two sentences:

*I was too tired to write it again **because** it was **very** late.*

Because it was very late, I was too tired to write it again.

There is no difference in meaning between these two sentences. When you write, use both styles. This will make your writing more varied and more interesting. However, there is a difference in punctuation.

6 With a partner, find the difference in punctuation. Write the explanation here.

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7 Rewrite these sentences using *because*.

a. I couldn't bring my homework. My dog ate my homework.

*I couldn't bring my homework **because** my dog ate it.*

***Because** my dog ate my homework, I couldn't bring it.*

b. I am too busy. I don't exercise.

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c. I have too much homework. I go to bed late.

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d. I can't give up smoking. I will put on weight.

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e. I lost my friend's book. I was careless.

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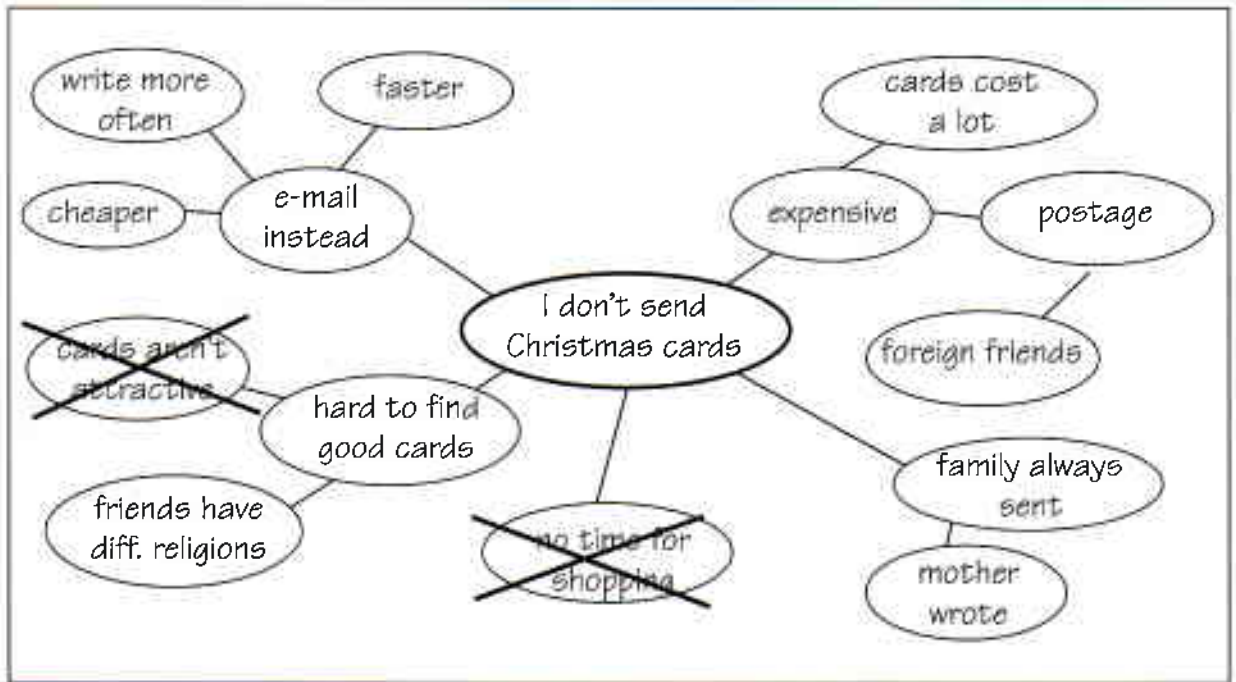
f. I'm not going to go to the beach. I have to take an exam.

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Brainstorming: Practice with word maps and freewriting

- 8 Look at this word map and answer the questions below.



- What is the writer's topic?
 - How many examples does the writer have?
 - Why did the writer cross out some ideas?
- 9 Read this paragraph. Were your guesses from exercise 8 above correct? Look at the word map again, and write a topic sentence for the paragraph. Then complete the paragraph with *so* or *because*.

Why I Don't Send Christmas Cards

My family has always sent Christmas cards to friends.

One reason is that I have friends all over the world, ^a sending cards to them would be expensive. In addition, it's difficult to choose the right cards

^b my friends have different religious beliefs.

Finally, I e-mail my friends almost every week. ^c I contact them so often, I don't have anything special to say at holiday times. Even though I don't send Christmas cards, I am still close to my friends.

10 Look at this picture, and think about what is happening.



11 Freewrite for five minutes about how the driver explains the cause of the accident.

Remember

When you are freewriting, ...

- write for five minutes without stopping.
- write as much as you can. You can cross out ideas you don't like later.
- don't worry about spelling, grammar, or organisation.

12 Check and edit your freewriting. Using your ideas, write at least three sentences with *so* or *because*. Then share your sentences with a partner or small group.

Put it together

- 13** Choose one of these topics and make a word map or freewrite to get some ideas.
 - a. A time I was late
 - b. An accident
 - c. A mistake
 - d. It wasn't my fault!

- 14** Edit your brainstorming. Cross out ideas you don't want to use and add more ideas if necessary.

- 15** Write a paragraph about your topic and then check your writing.

- 16** Exchange papers with a partner. Include your brainstorming.
 - Fill out the Peer Review Form on page 106.
 - Talk with your partner and go over each form.

- 17** Read your paragraph again.
 - Think about the comments from your partner.
 - Make any additions or changes to your paragraph that would make it stronger or more interesting.

- 18** Hand in the second draft of your paragraph to your teacher.