

Topic: Conjunctions

A conjunction is a linking word such as “and”, “or”, “but”. Conjunctions are words that link other words, phrases, or clauses together.

Examples of adverb of manner in the following sentences are in bold for easy identification.

1. The cat **and** its kittens.
2. The animal is large **but** timid.
3. Is this a sheep **or** a goat?
4. I like cooking **and** eating, **but** I don't like washing dishes afterward.
5. Sophie is clearly exhausted, **yet** she insists on dancing till dawn.

Make sure that the phrases joined by conjunctions are parallel (share the same structure).

Incorrect statement: Sam works quickly **and** careful.

Correct statement: Sam works quickly **and** carefully.

The second statement is correct because we need two adverbs to form the two parallel phrases. Therefore, we use the adverbs “**quickly**” and “**carefully**”.

There are four main types of conjunctions: coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions, and conjunctive adverbs.

Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions allow you to join words, phrases, and clauses of equal grammatical rank in a sentence. The most common coordinating conjunctions are **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so**. It is extremely important to know how to use punctuations when writing sentences with coordinate conjunctions.

Connecting Two Words: When a conjunction connects only two words no comma is needed. For example, Kim likes apples **and** bananas.

The conjunction “**and**” connects two words, “apples” and “bananas”.

Connecting Two Phrases: When a conjunction connects only two phrases no comma is needed. For example, Bethany works in a bar **or** a restaurant.

The conjunction “**or**” connects two noun phrases, “a bar” and “a restaurant”.

Connecting More Than Two Items: When we have more than two items we put commas after each item, except for the last item, to separate them.

For example, Daniel likes apples, mangos, **and** bananas.

The conjunction “and” connects three items, “apples”, “mangos” and “bananas”. Note that a comma goes between “apples” and “bananas” then the last comma goes before the conjunction “**and**”.

Connecting Two Independent Clauses: When a conjunction connects two independent clauses a comma is needed after the first clause.

For example, “We needed a place to concentrate, **so** we packed up our things and went to the library”.

The first clause in the sentence is “We needed a place to concentrate” and the second clause is “we packed up our things and went to the library”.

Notice the use of the comma when the coordinating conjunction “**so**” joins the two independent clauses.

Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions join independent and dependent clauses. A subordinating conjunction can signal a cause-and-effect relationship, a contrast, or some other kind of relationship between the clauses. Common subordinating conjunctions are because, since, as, although, though, while, and whereas. Sometimes an adverb, such as until, after, or before can function as a conjunction.

For example, I can stay out **until** the clock strikes twelve.

Here, the adverb **until** functions as a subordinating conjunction to connect two ideas: “I can stay out” (the independent clause) and “the clock strikes twelve” (the dependent clause). The independent clause could stand alone as a sentence; the dependent clause depends on the independent clause to make sense.

The subordinating conjunction doesn’t need to go in the middle of the sentence. It has to be part of the dependent clause, but the dependent clause can come before the independent clause.

“**Before** he leaves, make sure his room is clean”.

If the dependent clause comes first, use a comma before the independent clause. For example,

“I drank a glass of water **because** I was thirsty”.

“**Because** I was thirsty, I drank a glass of water”.

Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions are pairs of conjunctions that work together. Some examples are either/or, neither/nor, and not only/but also. For example,

1. Not only am I finished studying for English, **but** I’m also finished writing my history essay.
2. I am finished with both my English essay **and** my history essay.

Conjunctive Adverbs

A conjunctive adverb is a word (or short phrase) that provides a link to the previous sentence or previous independent clause. Conjunctive adverbs bring together two complete thoughts.

Here is a list of common conjunctive adverbs:

- Also
- Consequently
- Furthermore
- However
- Incidentally
- Indeed
- Likewise
- Meanwhile
- Nevertheless
- Nonetheless
- Therefore

They can also be phrases (i.e., not just single words):

- as a result
- as a consequence
- for example
- on the contrary

Here are some examples of conjunctive adverbs in sentences:

1. The instructor's English is poor; **consequently**, they all failed the exam.
2. The instructor's English is poor. **Consequently**, they all failed the exam.

Note that a conjunctive adverb is preceded by a semicolon when it joins two independent clauses but a period (full stop) when it joins two sentences.

1. Mr. Evans is my father; **however**, I am not responsible for what he says.
2. You failed to meet the deadline. **Therefore**, the deal is off.