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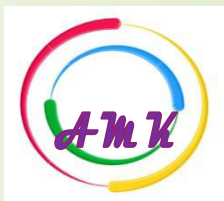


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# Conjunctions

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## Conjunctions

Some words are satisfied spending an evening at home, alone, eating ice-cream right out of the box, watching *Seinfeld* re-runs on TV, or reading a good book. Others aren't happy unless they're out on the town, mixing it up with other words; they're *joiners* and they just can't help themselves. A conjunction is a joiner, a word that connects (conjoins) parts of a sentence.

Conjunctions have three basic forms:

- Single Word  
for example: and, but, because, although
- Compound (often ending with *as* or *that*)  
for example: provided that, as long as, in order that
- Correlative (surrounding an adverb or adjective)  
for example: so...that

Conjunctions have two basic functions or "jobs":

- Coordinating conjunctions are used to join two parts of a sentence that are grammatically equal. The two parts may be single words or clauses, for example:  
- *Jack and Jill* went up the hill.  
- *The water was warm, but I didn't go swimming.*
- Subordinating conjunctions are used to join a subordinate dependent clause to a main clause, for example:  
- *I went swimming although it was cold.*

Position

- Coordinating conjunctions always come between the words or clauses that they join.
- Subordinating conjunctions usually come at the beginning of the subordinate clause.

Coordinating Conjunctions	Correlative Conjunctions	Common Subordinating Conjunctions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• and</li> <li>• but</li> <li>• or</li> <li>• nor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• either...or</li> <li>• neither...nor</li> <li>• not only...but also</li> <li>• both...and</li> <li>• whether...or</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• after</li> <li>• before</li> <li>• although</li> <li>• though</li> <li>• even though</li> <li>• as much as</li> <li>• as long as</li> <li>• as soon as</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in order that</li> <li>• so</li> <li>• if</li> <li>• lest</li> <li>• even if</li> <li>• that</li> <li>• unless</li> <li>• until</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• because</li> <li>• since</li> <li>• so that</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when</li> <li>• where</li> <li>• whether</li> <li>• while</li> </ul>
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**COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS**

The simple, little conjunctions are called coordinating conjunctions (you can click on the words to see specific descriptions of each one):

Coordinating Conjunctions						
and	but	or	yet	for	nor	so

1. And—means "in addition to":  
We are going to a zoo and an aquarium on the same day.
2. But—connects two different things that are not in agreement:  
I am a night owl, but she is an early bird.
3. Or—indicates a choice between two things:  
Do you want a red one or a blue one?
4. So—illustrates a result of the first thing:  
This song has been very popular, so I downloaded it.
5. For—means "because":  
I want to go there again, for it was a wonderful trip.
6. Yet—indicates contrast with something:  
He performed very well, yet he didn't make the final cut.

When a coordinating conjunction connects two independent clauses, it is often (but not always) accompanied by a comma:

When a coordinating conjunction is used to connect all the elements in a series, a comma is not used:

**CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS**

<i>either. . . or</i>	<i>both. . . and</i>
<i>neither. . . nor</i>	<i>not only. . . but also</i>

Correlative Conjunctions are simply pairs of conjunctions used in a sentence to join different words or groups of words in a sentence together. Correlative Conjunctions are generally not used to link sentences themselves, instead they link two or more words of equal importance within the sentence itself. Some of the more commonly used correlative conjunctions are -

Both the shoes and the dress were completely overpriced.

- This is an example of using the correlative conjunctions 'both/and' in a sentence. As you can see in this sentence, the 'shoes' and the 'dress' were equally important elements that needed to be given the same importance.

They should either change their strategy or just forfeit the game.

- The 'either/or' conjunctions are used to suggest a choice between two options. Here the choice being suggested is between - 'change their strategy' or 'forfeit the game'.

Just as she loves hiking so she enjoys travelling as well.

- The correlative conjunctions 'just as/so' are used to link two phrases that have a similar theme or are referring to a similar thing together. This conjunction is used to show the correspondence between two phrases or words.

He neither helps around the house nor does he look for a job.

- 'Neither/nor' are conjunctions that are used to deny or negate words and phrases. In the case of 'neither', it gives two options that are both negated. 'Nor' is the negative form of 'or'.

Not only does he play the lead guitar but he is also the band's songwriter.

- The correlative conjunctions 'not only/but' are used to show an additional and important element in the sentence that is used to indicate excess when combined with the first element. For instance, in this sentence the fact that he is a guitarist and a song writer are equally important but when shown together, they indicate an excess of talent in the person.

It doesn't matter whether the roses are fresh or if they are drooping, just buy them.

- 'Whether/or' is used as a conjunction to show two different options in the sentence. The conjunction can be used both in a manner of negation and confirmation.

These pairs of conjunctions require equal (parallel) structures after each one.

## CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS

These conjunctions join independent clauses together.

The following are frequently used conjunctive adverbs:

<i>after all</i>	<i>in addition</i>	<i>next</i>
<i>also</i>	<i>incidentally</i>	<i>nonetheless</i>
<i>as a result</i>	<i>indeed</i>	<i>on the contrary</i>
<i>besides</i>	<i>in fact</i>	<i>on the other hand</i>
<i>consequently</i>	<i>in other words</i>	<i>otherwise</i>
<i>finally</i>	<i>instead</i>	<i>still</i>
<i>for example</i>	<i>likewise</i>	<i>then</i>
<i>furthermore</i>	<i>meanwhile</i>	<i>therefore</i>
<i>hence</i>	<i>moreover</i>	<i>thus</i>
<i>however</i>	<i>nevertheless</i>	

## AND

- To suggest that one idea is chronologically sequential to another: "Tashonda sent in her applications and waited by the phone for a response."
- To suggest that one idea is the result of another: "Willie heard the weather report and promptly boarded up his house."
- To suggest that one idea is in contrast to another (frequently replaced by *but* in this usage): "Juanita is brilliant and Shalimar has a pleasant personality."

- d. To suggest an element of surprise (sometimes replaced by *yet* in this usage): "Hartford is a rich city and suffers from many symptoms of urban blight."
- e. To suggest that one clause is dependent upon another, conditionally (usually the first clause is an imperative): "Use your CREDIT CARDS frequently and you'll soon find yourself deep in debt."
- f. To suggest a kind of "comment" on the first clause: "Charlie became addicted to gambling — and that surprised no one who knew him."

**BUT**

- a. To suggest a contrast that is unexpected in light of the first clause: "Joey lost a fortune in THE STOCK MARKET, but he still seems able to live quite comfortably."
- b. To suggest in an affirmative sense what the first part of the sentence implied in a negative way (sometimes replaced by *on the contrary*): "The club never INVESTED foolishly, but used the services of a sage INVESTMENT counselor."
- c. To connect two ideas with the meaning of "with the exception of" (and then the second word takes over as subject): "Everybody but Goldenbreath is trying out for the team."

**OR**

- a. To suggest that only one possibility can be realized, excluding one or the other: "You can study hard for this exam or you can fail."
- b. To suggest the inclusive combination of alternatives: "We can broil chicken on the grill tonight, or we can just eat leftovers."
- c. To suggest a refinement of the first clause: "Smith College is the premier all-women's college in the country, or so it seems to most Smith College alumnae."
- d. To suggest a restatement or "correction" of the first part of the sentence: "There are no rattlesnakes in this canyon, or so our guide tells us."
- e. To suggest a negative condition: "The New Hampshire state motto is the rather grim "Live free or die."
- f. To suggest a negative alternative without the use of an imperative (see use of *and* above): "They must approve his political style or they wouldn't keep electing him mayor."

**NOR**

The conjunction *NOR* is not extinct, but it is not used nearly as often as the other conjunctions, so it might feel a bit odd when *nor* does come up in conversation or writing. Its most common use is as the little brother in the correlative pair, *neither-nor*

- He is neither sane nor brilliant.
- That is neither what I said nor what I meant.

It can be used with other negative expressions:

- That is not what I meant to say, nor should you interpret my statement as an admission of guilt.

It is possible to use *nor* without a preceding negative element, but it is unusual and, to an extent, rather stuffy:

- George's handshake is as good as any written contract, nor has he ever proven untrustworthy.

## YET

The word *YET* functions sometimes as an adverb and has several meanings: in addition ("yet another cause of trouble" or "a simple yet noble woman"), even ("yet more expensive"), still ("he is yet a novice"), eventually ("they may yet win"), and so soon as now ("he's not here yet"). It also functions as a coordinating conjunction meaning something like "nevertheless" or "but." The word *yet* seems to carry an element of distinctiveness that *but* can seldom register.

- John plays basketball well, yet his favorite sport is badminton.
- The visitors complained loudly about the heat, yet they continued to play golf every day.

In sentences such as the second one, above, the pronoun subject of the second clause ("they," in this case) is often left out. When that happens, the comma preceding the conjunction might also disappear: "The visitors complained loudly yet continued to play golf every day."

## FOR

The word *FOR* is most often used as a preposition, of course, but it does serve, on rare occasions, as a coordinating conjunction. Some people regard the conjunction *for* as rather highfalutin and literary, and it does tend to add a bit of weightiness to the text. Beginning a sentence with the conjunction "for" is probably not a good idea, except when you're singing "For he's a jolly good fellow. "For" has serious sequential implications and in its use the order of thoughts is more important than it is, say, with *because* or *since*. Its function is to introduce the reason for the preceding clause:

- John thought he had a good chance to get the job, for his father was on the company's board of trustees.
- Most of the visitors were happy just sitting around in the shade, for it had been a long, dusty journey on the train.

## SO

Sometimes it can connect two independent clauses along with a comma, but sometimes it can't. For instance, in this sentence,

- Soto is not the only Olympic athlete in his family, so are his brother, sister, and his Uncle Chet.

where the word *so* means "as well" or "in addition," most careful writers would use a semicolon between the two independent clauses. In the following sentence, where *so* is acting like a minor-league "therefore," the conjunction and the comma are adequate to the task:

- Soto has always been nervous in large gatherings, so it is no surprise that he avoids crowds of his adoring fans.

Sometimes, at the beginning of a sentence, *so* will act as a kind of summing up device or transition, and when it does, it is often set off from the rest of the sentence with a comma:

- So, the sheriff peremptorily removed the child from the custody of his parents.

## SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

A Subordinating Conjunction (sometimes called a dependent word or subordinator) comes at the beginning of a Subordinate (or Dependent) Clause and establishes the relationship between the dependent clause and the rest of the sentence. It also turns the clause into something that depends on the rest of the sentence for its meaning.

- He took to the stage as though he had been preparing for this moment all his life.
- Because he loved acting, he refused to give up his dream of being in the movies.
- Unless we act now, all is lost.

Notice that some of the subordinating conjunctions in the table below — after, before, since — are also prepositions, but as subordinators they are being used to introduce a clause and to subordinate the following clause to the independent element in the sentence.

Common Subordinating Conjunctions		
after	if	though
although	if only	till
as	in order that	unless
as if	now that	until
as long as	once	when
as though	rather than	whenever
because	since	where
before	so that	whereas
even if	than	wherever
even though	that	while

## CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS

Some conjunctions combine with other words to form what are called correlative conjunctions. They always travel in pairs, joining various sentence elements that should be treated as grammatically equal.

- She led the team not only in statistics but also by virtue of her enthusiasm.
- Polonius said, "Neither a borrower nor a lender be."
- Whether you win this race or lose it doesn't matter as long as you do your best.

## EXAMPLES

- He plays tennis *and* soccer
- He works quickly *but* accurately
- You'd better do your homework, *or* you'll get a terrible grade.
- I didn't know that she can *neither* read *nor* write.
- You can *either* walk to school *or* take the bus.

- *Both Sara and James* are invited to the party.
- *Whether* you watch TV *or* do your homework is your decision.
- *Not only* are they noisy *but* they are *also* lazy.
- He reads the newspapers *after* he finishes work.
- *Even if* you get the best grade in the writing test, you'll need to pass an oral test.
- *Although* he is very old, he goes jogging every morning.
- She didn't go to school *because* she was ill.
- They went to bed *since* it was late
- *As soon as* the teacher had arrived, they started work.

Put a Comma before a Conjunction If It Joins Two Independent Clauses

Words like *and*, *or*, and *but* are known as conjunctions. (There are other conjunctions, but these three are by far the most common.)

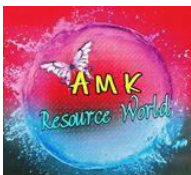
(NB: Conjunctions are often used in lists, and the ruling about using a comma before a conjunction in a list depends on whether you're following US or UK writing conventions, or whether you're an advocate of the Oxford Comma.)

This page is about conjunctions that are used to merge two standalone "sentences" (or independent clauses as they're really called) into one using a conjunction. This is a very common practice. When a conjunction is used in this way, it is usual to place a comma before it.

#### Examples:

- He is a great swimmer, **but** he prefers to play golf. ✓  
 "He is a great swimmer."  
 +  
 "He prefers to play golf."  
 (This is two standalone "sentences" (i.e., independent clauses) merged into one with *but*. Therefore, a comma is required before *but*.)
- I may consider your plan, **or** I may disregard it. ✓  
 "I may consider your plan"  
 +  
 "I may disregard it."

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