

Conjunctions

What's a Conjunction?

A conjunction is a part of speech that links words, phrases and clauses. Think of them as bridges that connect ideas. Conjunctions fall into one of four categories based on how they're used.

What are the Types of Conjunctions?

There are four categories of conjunctions:

Coordinating conjunctions (or, and, but)

Correlative conjunctions (and/or, not only/but also)

Subordinating conjunctions (since, because, when)

Conjunctive adverbs (however, therefore)

Here's a closer look at how to use them and what to watch for in terms of punctuation and construction.

1. Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions are single words (example: and, but, or, so). They link equivalent grammatical elements, such as nouns with nouns, and clauses with clauses. The ideas being connected carry the same weight in a sentence.

I stayed up all night writing, so I was tired the next day

She's editing and proofreading my essay.

What to watch for when using coordinating conjunctions:

When a coordinating conjunction joins two independent clauses (complete thoughts or sentences), use a comma between the clauses.

I can't remember the rules, so I need a refresher.

When you're joining an independent clause and a dependent clause (incomplete thought), you don't need a comma.

I prefer to write on my laptop but edit on paper.

2. Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions work in pairs (example: either/or, both/and, not only/but also, as/as) Similar to coordinating conjunctions, they link grammatical elements of similar importance.

I not only passed the exam, but also got 100%.

The box is as tall as it is wide.

What to watch for when using correlative conjunctions: Correlative conjunctions need parallel construction. Check the words after each conjunction and make sure they're similarly structured.

3. Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions are one or more words that unite ideas in a complex sentence (example: as soon as, in case, unless, while). They link dependent clauses (incomplete thoughts) to independent clauses (complete thoughts).

Here's some cash in case your credit card doesn't work. The subordinating conjunction is placed in front of the dependent clause. As Cambridge Dictionary explains, subordinating conjunctions modify the independent clause and provide a

cause, reason, result or purpose. What to watch for when using subordinating conjunctions:

Use a comma if the subordinating conjunction and dependent clause are at the beginning of a sentence. Otherwise, the comma isn't required. As soon as she's finished her phone call, we'll leave for the restaurant. We'll leave for the restaurant as soon as she's finished her phone call