

What Is a Conjunction?

A conjunction is the glue that holds words, phrases and clauses (both dependent and independent) together. There are three different kinds of conjunctions -- coordinating, subordinating, and correlative -- each serving its own, distinct purpose, but all working to bring words together.

Thanks to conjunctions, we don't have to write short, choppy sentences. We can extend our lines with simple words like "and" or "but" and perhaps a comma or two.

What Is a Coordinating Conjunction?

Coordinating conjunctions are what come to most people's minds when they hear the word "conjunction." Coordinating conjunctions join two or more sentences, main clauses, words, or other parts of speech which are of the same syntactic importance. Also known as coordinators, coordinating conjunctions are used to give equal emphasis to a pair of main clauses.. There are seven of them, and they're easy to remember if you can just think of the acronym "FANBOYS."

For - Explains reason or purpose (just like "because")

And - Adds one thing to another

Nor - Used to present an alternative negative idea to an already stated negative idea

But - Shows contrast

Or - Presents an alternative or a choice

Yet - Introduces a contrasting idea that follows the preceding idea logically

So - Indicates effect, result or consequence

Coordinating Conjunctions Used in Sentences

Here are some example sentences using the seven coordinating conjunctions:

I go to the park every Sunday, for I love to watch the ducks on the lake.

I watch the ducks on the lake and the shirtless men playing soccer.

I don't go for the fresh air nor for the ducks; I just like soccer.

Soccer is entertaining in winter, but it's better in the heat of summer.

The men play on two teams: shirts or skins.

I always take a book to read, yet I never seem to turn a single page.

Coordinating Conjunction Rules

As there are only seven of these words, there are just a few rules for using coordinating conjunctions correctly:

Coordinating conjunctions always connect phrases, words, and clauses. For example: This batch of mushroom stew is savory and delicious.

Some instructors warn that starting a sentence with a coordinating conjunction is incorrect. Mostly, this is because they are attempting to help prevent you from writing fragments rather than complete sentences; sometimes though, it's just a personal preference. The fact is, you can begin sentences with coordinating conjunctions as long as you follow these three rules for doing so:

- Ensure that the coordinating conjunction is immediately followed by a main clause
- Don't use coordinating conjunctions to begin all of your sentences. Do so only when it makes your writing more effective.
- Although commas typically follow coordinating conjunctions used in areas other than the beginning of a sentence, they should not be used after coordinating conjunctions used to open sentences unless an interrupter immediately follows.

Examples of Coordinating Conjunctions

In the following examples, the coordinating conjunctions have been italicized for easy identification.

You can eat your cake with a spoon *or* fork.

My dog enjoys being bathed *but* hates getting his nails trimmed.

Bill refuses to eat peas, *nor* will he touch carrots.

I hate to waste a drop of gas, *for* it is very expensive these days.