

Chapter 16: COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

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General Notes on Chapter 16

- **OBJECTIVE:** This chapter gives students more choices for expressing related ideas. They will learn how English connects bits of information that are in a relationship of equality.
- **APPROACH:** Essentially, the chapter deals with the concept of parallelism. Two or more similar bits of information should be expressed in similar grammatical forms, according to the preferred style of written English. The chapter introduces the use of coordinating conjunctions and related rules for punctuation.
- **TERMINOLOGY:** A “conjunction” is a function word that serves as a connector or a linking word to join words, phrases, or clauses. This chapter deals with coordinating conjunctions, words that are used to create compound structures (e.g., compound subjects, compound verbs, compound sentences). In this text, correlative conjunctions (e.g., *both . . . and*) are called “paired conjunctions.” Subordinating conjunctions (e.g., *when, because, if*) are used to create complex sentences and are dealt with in the following chapter.

CHART 16-1: PARALLEL STRUCTURE

- Using parallel structure is an economical way to include several bits of information in a single phrase or clause. The ability to use parallel structure is highly valued in spoken and written English, for conciseness is a cultural value in English-speaking countries. Other cultures may have other values.
- Problems with parallel structure are common in student writing.
- To understand parallel structure, learners need to understand the concept of the ellipsis: that certain words have been omitted from a sentence. The sentence can be understood without them because the omitted words are repetitive. English rhetoric does not value repetitiveness. Wordy and repetitive: *Steve is coming to dinner and his friend is coming to dinner.* In ellipsis, the repeated words (*be + coming to dinner*) are omitted and the verb is made to agree with the compound subject: *Steve and his friend are coming to dinner.*

Write sentences without ellipsis on the board (e.g., *The man is wearing a hat and the man is wearing a coat. The woman is wearing her hat and the woman is holding her coat.*). Ask the students to omit any words they see that are repeated. Explain the grammatical source of the parallel structure.

- In a series, the last item is preceded by a conjunction (usually *and* or *or*). Many people place a comma before that conjunction (e.g., *an apple, a banana, and a pear*), but that is a matter of choice. Grammar books and style guides do not agree on whether that comma is required. This text uses the final comma so that the students can more clearly see each element of a serial parallel structure. In addition, spoken English patterns usually have a pause before the conjunction in this instance, and the comma reflects the pause.

□ EXERCISE 1, p. 348. Parallel structure. (Chart 16-1)

ANSWERS:

3. She spoke angrily and bitterly about the war. [adverb + adverb]
4. I looked for my book but couldn't find it. [verb + verb]
5. I hope to go to that university and study under Dr. Liu. [infinitive + infinitive]
6. In my spare time, I enjoy reading novels or watching television. [gerund + gerund]
7. He will leave at eight and arrive at nine. [verb + verb]
8. He should have broken his engagement to Beth and married Sue instead. [verb + verb]

□ EXERCISE 2, p. 349. Parallel structure. (Chart 16-1)

Ask the students to explain the grammatical functions of the parallel words. This may lead to a review of basic terminology (noun, verb, adjective, preposition, etc.) and how to recognize the various forms. Anyone having difficulty with this should review Appendix Unit A.

- ANSWERS: 2. Mary is opening the door and (is) greeting her guests. 3. Mary will open the door and (will) greet her guests. 4. Alice is kind, generous, and trustworthy. 5. Please try to speak more loudly and clearly. 6. He gave her flowers on Sunday, candy on Monday, and a ring on Tuesday. 7. While we were in New York, we attended an opera, ate at marvelous restaurants, and visited some old friends. 8. He decided to quit school, (to) go to California, and (to) find a job. [Note: *To* is usually not repeated in parallel infinitives unless the sentence is long and complicated. In a series, if the second *to* (*to go* in item 8) is included, the third *to* (*to find*) should be included also.] 9. I am looking forward to

going to Italy and eating wonderful pasta every day. [Note: Point out that *to* is a preposition here, followed by a gerund.] 10. I should have finished my homework and (should have) cleaned up my room. 11. The boy was old enough to work and (to) earn some money. 12. He preferred to play baseball or (to) spend his time in the streets with other boys. 13. I like coffee but not tea. 14. I have met his mother (,) but not his father. 15. Jake would like to live in Puerto Rico (,) but not (in) Iceland.

□ **EXERCISE 3, p. 350. Parallel structure. (Chart 16-1)**

Students might enjoy working in pairs to complete these sentences. Then you can ask for several versions of each item from the class. Exercises 3 and 4 could also be assigned as out-of-class homework now that the students understand parallel structure.

POSSIBLE COMPLETIONS: 2. the food—I like to become acquainted with the people, (the) customs, and (the) food of other countries. 3. the noise—I dislike living in a city because of the air pollution, (the) crime, and (the) noise. 4. economic—We discussed some of the social, political, and economic problems of the United States. 5. a warm climate—Hawaii has a warm climate, many interesting tropical trees and flowers, and beautiful beaches. 6. is a good leader—Mary Hart would make a good president because she is a good leader, works effectively with others, and has a reputation for integrity and independent thinking.

□ **EXERCISE 4, p. 351. Parallel structure. (Chart 16-1)**

Students may find item 8 difficult to complete.

POSSIBLE COMPLETIONS: 2. competent [adjective] 3. said, “Good morning.” [verb phrase] 4. reading the newspaper [-ing verb] 5. leave for work [verb] 6. Swimming at the lake [gerund] 7. hiking on mountain trails [gerund] 8. supportive of those who are in trouble / generous to those in need / kind to people down on their luck [adjective]

□ **EXERCISE 5, p. 351. Error analysis: parallel structure. (Chart 16-1)**

ANSWERS:

1. By obeying the speed limit, we can save energy, lives, and money.
2. My home offers me a feeling of security, warmth, and love.
3. The pioneers labored to clear away the forest and plant crops.
4. When I refused to help her, she became very angry and shouted at me.
5. In my spare time, I enjoy taking care of my aquarium and working on my stamp collection. OR In my spare time, I enjoy taking care of my aquarium and ~~to~~ I work on my stamp collection.
6. With their keen sight, fine hearing, and ~~they have~~ a refined sense of smell, wolves hunt elk, deer, moose, and caribou.
7. All plants need light, ~~to have~~ a suitable climate, and an ample supply of water and minerals from the soil.
8. Slowly and cautiously, the firefighter ascended the burned staircase.
9. The Indian cobra snake and the king cobra use poison from their fangs in two ways: by injecting it directly into their prey or ~~they~~ (by) spitting it into the eyes of the victim.
10. On my vacation, I lost a suitcase, broke my glasses, and I missed my flight home.
11. When Anna moved, she had to rent an apartment, make new friends, and ~~to~~ find a job.

□ **EXERCISE 6, p. 352. Error analysis: Parallel structure. (Chart 16-1)**

ERRATUM: The mischievous misprint gremlins misspelled “analysis” in the title of this exercise. This is corrected in later printings.

ANSWERS:

What do people in your country think of bats? Are they mean and scary creatures, or are they symbols of happiness and luck?

In Western countries, many people have an unreasoned fear of bats. According to scientist Dr. Sharon Horowitz, bats are beneficial and harmless mammals. “When I was a child, I believed that a bat would attack me and tangle itself in my hair. Now I know better,” said Dr. Horowitz.

Contrary to popular Western myths, bats do not attack humans and are not blind. Although a few bats may be infected, they are not major carriers of rabies or earry other dread diseases. Bats help natural plant life by pollinating plants, spreading seeds, and they eating insects. If you get rid of bats that eat overripe fruit, then fruit flies can flourish and destroy the fruit industry.

According to Dr. Horowitz, bats make loving, ~~pets, and they are~~ trainable, and are gentle pets. Not many people, however, are known to have bats as pets, and bats themselves prefer to avoid people.

**CHART 16-2: PAIRED CONJUNCTIONS: BOTH . . . AND;
NOT ONLY . . . BUT ALSO; EITHER . . . OR;
NEITHER . . . NOR**

- There are two important grammar points here: (1) subject–verb agreement and (2) parallel structure. Both are practiced in the following exercises.
- Some native speakers of English have trouble using these structures correctly (according to formal English preferences); learners can expect to be confused sometimes, too. In actual usage of *neither . . . nor*, native speakers often use a plural verb with two singular subjects (e.g., *Neither my mother nor my sister **are** here. Neither my brother nor I **were** interested*). This usage is not presented in the text because it seems unnecessarily confusing for the learners. You may wish to mention it, though, perhaps with the caveat “When in doubt, use formal English.”
- Another point not mentioned in the text is that when there are two independent clauses connected by *not only . . . but also*, the first independent clause usually (but not always) has inverted subject–verb word order. (When a sentence begins with a negative, the subject and verb are often inverted. See Appendix Chart D-3, p. A20.) Example: *Not only **does John go** to school full time, but he also has a full-time job*. You may or may not wish to introduce this point to your students.

□ **EXERCISE 7, p. 353. Paired conjunctions. (Chart 16-2)**

Ask the students to explain how they chose *is* or *are*.

ANSWERS: 2. is 3. is 4. are 5. is 6. are 7. are 8. are

□ **EXERCISE 8, p. 353. Error analysis: paired conjunctions. (Chart 16-2)**

ANSWERS: [The paired conjunctions are underlined.]

1. John will call either Mary or Bob. OR Either John or Bob will call Mary.
2. Sue saw not only the mouse but also the cat. OR Not only Sue but (also) the cat saw the mouse.
3. Both my mother and (my) father talked to the teacher. OR My mother talked to both my teacher and my father.
4. Either Mr. Anderson or Ms. Wiggins is going to teach our class today.
5. I enjoy reading not only novels but also magazines.
6. Oxygen is plentiful. Both air and water contain oxygen. [*Air* and *water* are equals; they are both substances that contain oxygen. They are the two items to join in a parallel structure. *Oxygen* and *water* are not parallel substances.]

□ **EXERCISE 9, p. 354. Paired conjunctions. (Chart 16-2)**

For an advanced class, conduct this as a teacher-led exercise with students' books closed. Group or pair work is also possible, followed by a quick written quiz using one item from each section.

Both . . . and is used more frequently than *not only . . . but also*. *Not only . . . but also* tends to mean that something is surprising or especially interesting. Note that "Yes" is the required answer in the first three groups of items, but "No" is the answer with *neither . . . nor*.

PART I ANSWERS: 2. Yes, both the driver and the passenger were injured in the accident.
3. Yes, both wheat and corn are grown in Kansas. 4. Yes, he both buys and sells used cars.
5. Yes, I had both lunch and dinner with my friends. 6. Yes, the city suffers from both air (pollution) and water pollution.

PART II ANSWERS: 8. Yes, not only his cousin but also his mother-in-law **is** living with him.
9. Yes, not only my country but also the United States **has** good universities. [*The United States* is one country; therefore, the verb is singular. See Chart 6-5, p. 92.] 10. Yes, I lost not only my wallet but also my keys.
11. Yes, she not only goes to school but also has a full-time job. 12. Yes, he bought not only a coat but also a new pair of shoes.

PART III ANSWERS: 14. Yes, I'm going to give my friend either a book or a pen for her birthday.
15. Yes, either my sister or my brother will meet me at the airport.
16. Yes, they can either go swimming or play tennis. 17. Yes, I'm going to vote for either Mr. Smith or Mr. Jones.
18. Yes, I'll go to either New Orleans or Miami for my vacation.

PART IV ANSWERS: 20. No, neither her husband nor her children **speak** English.
21. No, neither the students nor the teacher **is** wide awake today. 22. No, they have neither a refrigerator nor a stove for their new apartment.
23. No, she enjoys neither hunting nor fishing. 24. No, the result was neither good nor bad.

□ **EXERCISE 10, p. 355. Paired conjunctions. (Chart 16-2)**

ANSWERS: [The paired conjunctions are underlined.]

2. Both Ron and Bob **enjoy** horseback riding. OR Not only Ron but also Bob **enjoys** horseback riding.
3. You can have either tea or coffee.
4. Neither Arthur nor Ricardo **is** in class today.
5. Both Arthur and Ricardo **are** absent. OR Not only Arthur but also Ricardo **is** absent.
6. We can either fix dinner for them here or take them to a restaurant. [*Fix dinner* = prepare dinner.]
7. She wants to buy either a Chevrolet or a Toyota.
8. Both the leopard and the tiger **face** extinction.
9. Neither the library nor the bookstore **has** the book I need.
10. We could either fly or take the train.

11. The president’s assistant will neither confirm nor deny the story. 12. Both coal and oil **are** irreplaceable natural resources. OR Not only coal but also oil **is** an irreplaceable natural resource. 13. Both smallpox and malaria **are** dangerous diseases. 14. Neither her roommates nor her brother **knows** where she is. 15. According to the news report, it will either snow or rain tonight.

CHART 16-3: COMBINING INDEPENDENT CLAUSES WITH COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

- Formal English usually requires a comma preceding the conjunction when it connects two independent clauses. Example (e) is generally not favored in formal English, but is common in informal writing such as letters to friends and family.
- Another term for a “run-on sentence” is a “comma splice” when a comma is used in place of a period. Run-on sentences are a common problem in student writing (native and non-native alike).
- Advanced students may be interested to know that it is possible to use commas between independent clauses in a series: *Janet washed the windows, Bob swept the floor, and I dusted the furniture.* INCORRECT: *Janet washed the windows, Bob swept the floor.*
- Another conjunction could be added to this section if you wish. The connector “then” is frequently used in the pattern of coordinating conjunctions between two independent clauses:
*Remove the book from the shelf yourself, **then** take it to the librarian to check it out.*
*Stir the flour and milk, **then** add two eggs and a cup of sugar.*
*Buy your ticket at the counter, **then** proceed to the gate.*
*We ate, **then** we started home.* (This example is taken from the *Random House Webster’s College Dictionary*.)

NOTE: Some English stylists may not approve using a comma and *then* to connect two independent clauses, preferring to use a period and a capitalized *Then*.

□ **EXERCISES 11 and 12, pp. 356–357. Combining independent clauses with coordinating conjunctions. (Chart 16-3)**

Exercise 11 should be done as seatwork in about five to eight minutes. After reviewing the answers with you, the students could continue with Exercise 12 as seatwork or homework. Exercise 11 is intended to help you explain the chart. Exercise 12 is intended as practice for the students.

EX. 11 ANSWERS: 2. The teacher lectured. The students took notes. 3. The teacher lectured, and the students took notes. [The comma is not required between two short clauses. Also possible, informally: period and capitalized *And*] 4. Elena came to the meeting, but Pedro stayed home. [The comma is not required. Also possible: period and capitalized *But*] 5. Elena came to the meeting. Her brother stayed home. 6. Her academic record was outstanding, yet she was not accepted by the university. 7. I have not finished writing my term paper yet. I will not be finished until sometime next week. 8. (no change) [*for* is a preposition, not a conjunction, here.] 9. We had to go to the grocery store, for there was nothing in the house to fix for dinner. 10. Kostas didn’t have enough money to buy an airplane ticket, so he couldn’t fly home for the holiday.

EX. 12 ANSWERS:

1. A thermometer is used to measure temperature. **A** barometer measures air pressure.
2. Daniel made many promises, but he had no intention of keeping them.
3. I always enjoyed mathematics in high school, so I decided to major in it in college.
4. Anna is in serious legal trouble, for she had no car insurance at the time of the accident.
5. Last night Martha had to study for a test, so she went to the library. [A comma after *night* is possible but not required.]
6. The ancient Egyptians had good dentists. **A**rchaeologists have found mummies that had gold fillings in their teeth.
7. Both John and I had many errands to do yesterday. **J**ohn had to go to the post office and the bookstore. **I** had to go to the post office, the travel agency, and the bank.
8. I did not like the leading actor, yet the movie was quite good on the whole.
9. The team of researchers has not finished compiling the statistics yet. **T**heir work will not be made public until later.
10. We have nothing to fear, for our country is strong and united.
11. He slapped his desk in disgust. **H**e had failed another examination and had ruined his chances for a passing grade in the course.
12. I struggled to keep my head above water. **I** tried to yell for help, but no sound came from my mouth.
13. The earthquake was devastating. **T**all buildings crumbled and fell to the earth.
14. It was a wonderful picnic. **T**he children waded in the stream, collected rocks and insects, and flew kites. **T**he teenagers played an enthusiastic game of baseball. **T**he adults busied themselves preparing the food, supervising the children, and playing a game or two of volleyball.
15. Some people collect butterflies for a hobby. **T**hese collectors capture them with a net and put them in a jar that has poison in it. **T**he dead butterflies are then mounted on a board.
16. Caterpillars eat plants and cause damage to some crops, but adult butterflies feed principally on nectar from flowers and do not cause any harm.
17. The butterfly is a marvel. **I**t begins as an ugly caterpillar and turns into a work of art.
18. The sight of a butterfly floating from flower to flower on a warm sunny day brightens anyone's heart. **A** butterfly is a charming and gentle creature. [It's possible to put a comma between *warm* and *sunny* to separate two descriptive adjectives; it would replace the word *and* between two adjectives of equal status.]

NOTE: Items 19 and 20 are intended to review the patterns and punctuation of adverb clauses as presented in Chapter 5 as a way of previewing the material soon to come in Chapter 17. The suggestion is that you take a moment here to prepare the students for the coming chapter.

19. When cold weather comes, some butterflies travel great distances to reach tropical climates.
20. Butterflies are admired throughout the world because they are beautiful. **T**hey can be found on every continent except Antarctica. [Point out that the period after *beautiful* shows which independent clause the adverb clause (*because they are beautiful*) should be linked to. With improper punctuation, the reader doesn't know exactly what relationships the writer intended. Following are examples of improper punctuation of adverb clauses: (a) *I should have stayed home. Because I wanted to see my friends. I went to the meeting.* (b) *I should have stayed home because I wanted to see my friends I went to the meeting.* Proper punctuation clarifies the writer's intent, which may be either of the following: (a) *I should have stayed home because I wanted to see my friends.* OR (b) *Because I wanted to see my friends, I went to the meeting.* Of course, the addition of other connectors and combining complex and compound structures could also greatly help to clarify the writer's meaning, e.g., *I should have stayed home because I wanted to see my friends, but I went to the meeting anyway.* OR *I should have stayed home, but because I wanted to see my friends, I went to the meeting.*]

□ **EXERCISE 13, p. 358. Writing. (Chapter 16)**

If possible, have the students write the first draft quickly in class. Then ask them to take that home and tighten it up. Request that both the first and second drafts be submitted to you.

Reproduce some of the more successful attempts at tightening writing style through good use of parallelism; discuss them with the class.

Some students may not want to produce two versions of the same paragraph, but you can assure them that most people—even very experienced and skilled authors—use this method of improving their writing. Revision with an eye toward conciseness is an essential process in producing good writing in English.