There are four basic types of sentence connectors: coordinating conjunctions, correlative conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, and conjunctive adverbs. A conjunction or conjunctive adverb is a joiner; a word that connects (conjoins) parts of a sentence.

**COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS**

Coordinating conjunctions **must always join grammatically equal (parallel) elements**:

- e.g., noun + noun; verb phrase + verb phrase; independent clause + independent clause.

There are seven coordinating conjunctions in English. An easy way to remember these seven conjunctions is to think of the acronym **FANBOYS**. Each of the letters in this unusual word is the first letter of one of the coordinating conjunctions. The most common are **AND, BUT and OR**.

- **FOR** – means “because,” introduces a “reason” clause, and joins it to a “result” clause.

> I was late, **for** I had forgotten my watch. (joins two independent clauses)

- **AND** - joins two similar ideas together

> The bowl of stew is **hot and delicious**. (joins two nouns)

> I will **eat it quickly and enjoy every bite**. (joins two independent clauses)

- **NOR** – used to combine two negative ideas. Note the reversed word order in the second clause below:

> I do not eat meat, **nor do I eat fish**. (joins two independent clauses)

- **BUT** - joins two contrasting ideas together

> John is Canadian, **but Sally is English**. (joins two independent clauses)
They speak the same language but different dialects. (joins two noun phrases)

**OR** - joins two alternative ideas

I could cook some supper, or we could order a pizza. (joins two independent clauses)

We could eat at home or at a restaurant. (joins two prepositional phrases)

**YET** – means “but” and joins two contrasting ideas.

I was completely exhausted yet happy. (joins two adjectival phrases)

She knew I was injured, yet she insisted that I jump over the fence. (joins two indep. clauses)

**SO** – introduces a clause containing a result, and joins it to a clause containing a reason/cause.

It was raining, so I brought an umbrella. (joins two independent clauses)

**CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS**

Some coordinating conjunctions combine with other words to form what are called correlative conjunctions. They always travel in pairs, joining various sentence elements that are grammatically equal. Here is a brief list of common correlative conjunctions:

both . . . and

Both my grandfather and my father worked in the steel plant. (noun phrases)

not only . . . but also

The explosion not only destroyed the school, but also flattened the bank. (verb phrases)

*NOTE the word order when this correlative pair joins two clauses:
Not only did I fail the exam, but I also missed the final assignment!

not . . . but

She is not going to attend university but will attend college. (verb phrases)

either . . . or/neither . . . nor

Bring either a macaroni salad or scalloped potatoes; it’s your choice. (noun phrases)

Bring neither a macaroni salad nor scalloped potatoes; no one likes them. (noun phrases)

whether . . . or

Corinne is trying to decide whether to go to medical school or to go to law school. (verb phr.)
SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

A subordinating conjunction is a word which introduces a subordinate (dependent) clause and joins it to an independent clause. There are many, but the more commonly used ones are:

**BECAUSE, AS, SINCE** - used to introduce the cause in a cause/effect relationship between two ideas

**ALTHOUGH, EVEN THOUGH, WHILE** (meaning ‘although’), **WHEREAS** - used to express contrast between ideas

**AFTER, BEFORE, WHEN, WHILE** (meaning ‘during’) - used to show time

**IF** – used to show a condition

Notice the difference in punctuation, depending on whether the subordinate clause comes first or second. If it comes first, a comma is needed. Examples:

**Because/As/Since** it was raining, I took my umbrella.

I lost my job **because** I was often late.

**Since** I have no money, I can't go to the movie.

I used to visit my grandparents frequently **when** I was a little girl.

**If** you love me, you’ll buy me a pony.

**Although/Even though** she is quite small, she's very strong.

She’s very strong **even though** she’s quite small.

John is tall, **whereas** Mary is quite small.*
*Note* that “whereas” is used differently from “although.” It is less flexible, and can only be used to contrast two complete facts rather than two aspects of the same item/person/subject. We *cannot* say, “She’s very strong, whereas she’s quite small.”

*Note* that “whereas” and “while” are *always* preceded by a comma, even if they are in the second clause. (My minor is in East Asian Studies, while Bob’s minor was Art History.)

**CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS/TRANSITIONS**

These words and phrases are extremely flexible and powerful because they not only connect ideas within a sentence but also create transitions between major ideas and sections within a piece of writing. Additionally, they can occupy several different positions in a sentence and can introduce an independent clause as a stand-alone sentence.

There are many conjunctive adverbs in English; however, some of the most common are:

**ADDITIONALLY, MOREOVER** – connects two similar ideas

**HOWEVER, NEVERTHELESS, IN CONTRAST** – connects two contrasting ideas

**THEREFORE, CONSEQUENTLY, THUS** – connects a result to a preceding cause

**FOR EXAMPLE, FOR INSTANCE** – connects an example/illustration to a preceding statement

**FIRST, NEXT, THEN, FINALLY** – shows a sequential relationship between ideas

**Use, position and punctuation:**

When connecting two independent clauses within a single sentence, use a semi-colon and comma:

I love learning about grammar; however, I don’t understand all of it.

When connecting ideas in separate sentences, use a period before the adverb and a comma after it:
I love learning about grammar. Nevertheless, I don’t understand all of it.

(Note: ‘Thus’ and ‘Then’ are exceptions and are not followed by commas in these cases.)

The adverb can occupy different positions in the second clause/sentence, depending on what we want to emphasise. When surrounded by other sentence parts, commas are used to set the adverb apart:

I love learning about grammar. I don’t, however, understand all of it. (emphasises contrast between positive feeling and negative ability)

I love learning about grammar. I don’t understand all of it, however. (emphasises contrast between learning and understanding or emphasises lack of complete understanding)

I love learning about grammar. He, however, hates it. (emphasises difference between he & I)

*See the “Transition Words & Phrases* handout for a great list of transitions by their logical function!*

Conjunctions sections adapted from [http://newton.uor.edu/facultyfolder/rider/conjunctions.htm](http://newton.uor.edu/facultyfolder/rider/conjunctions.htm); Conjunctive Adverbs section and Revision by: The Writing Centre/Carol Shields/June 2012