Success Center
Directed Learning Activity (DLA)

Coordinating Conjunctions

G004.1
Directed Learning Activity – Coordinating Conjunctions

Description: *In this Directed Learning Activity (DLA), you will learn how to combine sentences with coordinating conjunctions. This skill will enable you to more clearly communicate the relationships between the ideas in your sentences.*

Prior Knowledge: *This DLA assumes a working knowledge of independent clauses. If you haven’t covered this important topic in class this semester, the Success Center recommends completing the DLA “Types of Sentences: Compound” before attempting this activity.*

Materials: *You should have a sample of your own writing, so you can review the sentences in it.*

**Step One: Understanding the Role of Coordinating Conjunctions in Compound Sentences**

Combining two independent clauses creates one **compound sentence**.

**Two Independent Clauses:**

*The cafeteria is now closed. It will open tomorrow.*

**One Compound Sentence:**

*The cafeteria is now closed, but it will open tomorrow.*

In this compound sentence, there is a close relationship between the two items about the cafeteria. It creates a more interesting sentence than either one of the independent clauses alone.

You can create compound sentences like this by connecting two independent clauses with a **coordinating conjunction** (such as *but* in the example above). These conjunctions communicate the relationship between the ideas expressed by the independent clauses. When you connect two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction, you should always insert a comma before the conjunction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordinating Conjunction</th>
<th>Relationship Between Ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
<td>Shows that one is a cause of the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And</td>
<td>Shows either a combination of two similar ideas, or a sequence of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor</td>
<td>Shows a negative alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But</td>
<td>Shows a contrast between the two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or</td>
<td>Shows the two are alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yet</td>
<td>Shows a contrast between the two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td>Shows one is the result of the other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you can see in the table above, there are seven coordinating conjunctions: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet,* and *so*. Many students attempt to memorize them in that exact order using the mnemonic device **FANBOYS**. Each letter in **FANBOYS** is the first letter in one of the coordinating conjunctions – *f* is the first letter in *for; a, in and; n, in nor; b, in but; o, in or; y, in yet; and s, in so.*
Each of the compound sentences below contains two independent clauses connected with one coordinating conjunction. Put brackets – [ ] – around each independent clause and parentheses – ( ) – around each coordinating conjunction. The first one is done for you.

1. [ The student practiced writing every day ], ( yet ) [ she still felt uneasy about her progress. ]

2. We need to make sure that we leave early enough, for there is a test in our history class today.

3. My history class is in the Humanities Building, but my English class is in the Liberal Arts Building.

4. We could go to the library to study on our own, or we could work with a tutor in the Language Arts Success Center.

The patterns in these examples illustrate two important points to remember about compound sentences. First, all of the clauses in the compound sentences above are independent clauses – that is, each clause could stand on its own if it were not attached to another. Second, the coordinating conjunctions in the compound sentences above (yet, for, but, and or, respectively) appear right after commas.

Step Two: Selecting the Best Coordinating Conjunction to Combine Independent Clauses

Referring to the table on page 1, select the best coordinating conjunction in order to make compound sentences out of the independent clauses below. Write that conjunction on the shorter blank line in the sentence. On the longer blank line following each compound sentence, explain why you chose that particular coordinating conjunction.

1. The football team won the game, __________ they will now go to the state championship.

______________________________________________________________________________

2. Many students procrastinate when it is time to do their homework, __________ they tend to arrive exactly on time for their extracurricular activities.

______________________________________________________________________________

3. It is not necessary to buy your books before the first day of class, __________ is it necessary to come to campus before the first day of classes.

______________________________________________________________________________

Now, check your responses with this explanation.

In the first sentence, the coordinating conjunction could be either and or so. And would shows a sequence of events: first, the football team won the game, and, next, they will play in the
state championship. So, on the other hand, would show a cause-and-effect relationship – that the result of winning the game is being able to play in the state championship.

In the second sentence, the coordinating conjunction could be either but or yet. Either of these would show a contrast – a difference – between students putting off their homework until the last minute and arriving on time to participate in extracurricular activities.

In the third sentence, the best coordinating conjunction is nor. This shows a negative relationship between the first clause and the second clause – that is, the alternative presented in the second clause (coming to campus before the first day of class) is not necessary.

**Step Three: Creating Your Own Compound Sentences**

After reading each independent clause below, first select a coordinating conjunction from the table on page 1, and then write a relevant independent clause to create a compound sentence. Make sure your compound sentences clearly communicate the relationships between ideas created by their respective coordinating conjunctions.

1. Children learn best when they are in a loving environment, ____________________________
   ____________________________

2. Having a special outing with each parent is beneficial, ____________________________
   ____________________________

3. When Joana first learned of the position, she promised she’d apply for it, ______________
   __________________________________________________________________________

4. My nieces are adorable girls, ____________________________
   ____________________________

5. The student kept going to meet with her study group even when the best students started dropping out, ____________________________
   ____________________________

6. ____________________________, _________they walked slowly toward the river.
7. __________________________________________________________________________.
   __________
   they know when to stop writing, too.

8. __________________________________________________________________________.
   __________
   most students sit down and write their paper from start to finish without considering how it is put together.

9. __________________________________________________________________________.
   __________
   they include all of the best information in their final drafts.

10. __________________________________________________________________________.
     __________
     they understand that there may be some errors they can catch at the last minute.

Using at least two specific examples – one from sentences 1-5, and one from sentences 6-10 – explain your strategy for writing independent clauses that worked with the coordinating conjunctions you selected.

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Step Four: Applying What You Have Learned to Your Own Writing
   Read through a sample of your own writing. (If you don’t have one with you, compose a one-paragraph description of the Success Center on a separate piece of paper.) Identify at least two opportunities in it for combining independent clauses with coordinating conjunctions in order to create compound sentences. Which coordinating conjunctions would you use to communicate the relationships between the clauses in the resulting sentences?

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______________________________________________________________________________
Step Five: Reflecting on What You Have Learned

Before sharing your work with a tutor or an instructor, reflect on your learning. What did you learn as you advanced through this activity? How do you know that you comprehend the skill of using coordinating conjunctions to create compound sentences?
Tutor Feedback:

_____ In Step One, the student identified the independent clauses and coordinating conjunctions in the compound sentences.

_____ In Step Two, the student selected appropriate coordinating conjunctions to express the relationships between the ideas expressed independent clauses and explained why he/she chose those particular coordinating conjunctions.

_____ In Step Three, the student selected appropriate coordinating conjunctions and wrote relevant independent clauses to complete the compound sentences. In the reflection section, he/she used at least two specific examples – one from sentences 1-5, and one from sentences 6-10 – to explain his/her strategy for writing independent clauses that worked with the coordinating conjunctions he/she selected.

_____ In Step Four, the student identified at least two opportunities in his/her own writing for combining independent clauses with coordinating conjunctions in order to create compound sentences.

_____ In Step Five, the student responded thoughtfully and thoroughly to the reflection prompt.

Additional Comments: ____________________________________________________________

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______________________________________________________________________________

PRINT INSTRUCTOR/TUTOR NAME  DATE

INSTRUCTOR/TUTOR SIGNATURE

STUDENT – DO NOT FORGET TO TURN THIS SHEET IN AT THE FRONT DESK!

You may not get credit for completing this DLA if you fail to leave this sheet with the front desk receptionist.