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# Sentence Coordination and Subordination

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**Y**ou should read this chapter if you need to review or learn about

Do I Need  
to Read  
This Chapter?



- Coordinating dependent and independent clauses to create clear and logical sentences
- Subordinating clauses to make your sentences more concise and graceful
- Achieving parallel structure in your sentences

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## Get Started



Here, you'll learn how to decide which parts of your sentences to emphasize by using *coordination* and *subordination*. When you coordinate and subordinate, you establish clear and logical relationships between ideas. You will also learn how to use *parallel structure* by placing ideas in matching (or parallel) forms.

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## Coordinating Sentence Parts

In Chapter 8, you learned how to connect the parts of a sentence to avoid run-on sentences and sentence fragments. There's more to connecting sentence parts than just linking them, however. You have to decide which parts of each sentence to emphasize and why. The proper emphasis helps you communicate your ideas in writing with strength and style.

Sometimes you want to show that two or more ideas are equally important in a sentence. In such cases, you're looking to *coordinate*. Sentence *coordination* links ideas of equal importance. This process gives your writing balance by bringing together related independent clauses. Coordination involves using the right word or mark of punctuation to show different relationships between ideas.

There are four different ways to coordinate sentence parts:

1. Use a coordinating conjunction.
2. Use a pair of correlative conjunctions.
3. Use a semicolon.
4. Use a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb.

Let's look at each method now.

1. Use a coordinating conjunction.

As you write, use the coordinating conjunction that conveys the precise relationship between ideas that you seek. Each of the coordinating conjunctions has a different meaning, as the following chart shows:

<b>Coordinating Conjunction</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Function</b>
and	in addition to	to link ideas
but	however	to contrast ideas
for	as a result	to show cause
nor	negative	to reinforce negative
or	choice	to show possibilities
so	therefore	to show result
yet	however	to show contrast or difference

2. Use a pair of correlative conjunctions.

Link sentences with a correlative conjunction if you want to show a balance between two independent clauses.

either . . . or                      neither . . . nor  
 not only . . . but also            both . . . and

3. Use a semicolon.

Link independent clauses with a semicolon to show that the ideas are of equal importance.

A cause is what happens; the effect is the result.

The mechanic adjusted the carburetor; Tina's car now runs smoothly.

4. Use a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb.

As you learned in Chapter 8, there are many different conjunctive adverbs. Some are single words; others are phrases.

consequently	furthermore	therefore
nevertheless	as a result	for example
however	nonetheless	in addition

A semicolon and a conjunctive adverb together indicate different relationships, depending on the conjunctive adverb. The relationships are chiefly examples, continuation, and contrast.

I adore chili; unfortunately, it doesn't adore me!

The invention of air-conditioners has greatly influenced major migration trends; for example, Sunbelt cities such as Phoenix, Atlanta, Dallas, and Houston would never have grown as successfully without air-conditioning.

Follow these steps when you coordinate independent clauses:

- Decide which ideas can and should be combined.
- Select the method of coordination that shows the appropriate relationship between ideas.

Each way to coordinate sentences establishes a slightly different relationship between ideas. Often, there's no "right" answer when you're choosing which conjunctions and punctuation to use to coordinate ideas. As always, keep the "big three" considerations in mind:

- *Audience.* Your readers and their expectations
- *Purpose.* Why you are writing (to entertain, instruct, persuade, describe)
- *Style.* Your personal choices in diction (words) and sentence structure

With practice, you'll discover that some sentences are smoother and more logical than others. Study the following examples:

Uncoordinated: The dog's fur was tangled. We took her in for grooming.

Coordinated: The dog's fur was tangled, so we took her in for grooming.

The dog's fur was tangled; therefore, we took her in for grooming.

The dog's fur was tangled; as a result, we took her in for grooming.

Uncoordinated: There have been many controversial World Series. The most infamous was certainly the thrown World Series of 1919.

Coordinated: There have been many controversial World Series, but the most infamous was certainly the thrown World Series of 1919.

There have been many controversial World Series; however, the most infamous was certainly the thrown World Series of 1919.

Uncoordinated: Jack lost his briefcase. Jack lost his cell phone.

Coordinated: Jack lost both his briefcase and his cell phone.

Jack lost not only his briefcase but also his cell phone.

Uncoordinated: Each year it seems to get harder to pay for a college education. At least \$500 million in private-sector money is available to help students pay for their college education.

Coordinated: Each year it seems to get harder to pay for a college education, but at least \$500 million in private-sector money is available to help students pay for their college education.

Each year it seems to get harder to pay for a college education; however, at least \$500 million in private-sector money is available to help students pay for their college education.

## Quick Tip



Be careful not to connect unrelated ideas, establish a vague connection among ideas, or connect too many ideas in one sentence. These stylistic choices often create confusing sentences.

## Subordinating Sentence Parts

*Subordination* is connecting two unequal but related clauses with a subordinating conjunction to form a complex sentence. *Coordination* shows the relationship among equal independent clauses; *subordination*, in contrast, shows the relationship between ideas of unequal rank.

When you subordinate one part of a sentence to another, you make the dependent clause develop the main clause. Subordination helps you develop your ideas, trace relationships among ideas, and emphasize one idea over the other.

Therefore, you will want to use subordination to give your writing (and speech!) greater logic, coherence, and unity.

As with sentence coordination, sentence subordination calls for logic and thought.

Follow these four steps to subordinate sentence ideas:

1. First choose the idea or clause that you think is the most important.
2. Then make this your main clause by adding a subject or verb, if necessary. Make sure the main clause expresses a complete idea, too.
3. Choose the subordinating conjunction that best expresses the relationship between the main clause and the dependent clause.

4. Decide whether to place the main clause or the dependent clause first. See which order helps you achieve your purpose and appeal to your audience.

There are many subordinating conjunctions, including *after*, *although*, *because*, *before*, *if*, *though*, *since*, *when*, *till*, *unless*, *wherever*, *where*. The following chart shows some of the most common subordinating conjunctions and the relationships between ideas that they show.

Subordinating Conjunctions	Relationship
as, because	cause, reason
whether, rather than, than	choice
even if, if, unless, provided that	condition
though, even though, although	contrast
so, so that, in order that, that	effect, result
wherever, where	location
since, until, when, while, after, before, once, whenever	time

With practice, you'll discover that some sentences are smoother and more logical than others. Study the following examples:

Not subordinated: It snowed all night. School was closed the following day.

Subordinated: *Because* it snowed all night, school was closed the following day.

*Since* it snowed all night, school was closed the following day.

Not subordinated: About two million dollars had been bet on the Cincinnati Reds to win. The White Sox were favored five to one.

Subordinated: *Even though* the White Sox were favored five to one, about two million dollars had been bet on the Cincinnati Reds to win.

*Although* the White Sox were favored five to one, about two million dollars had been bet on the Cincinnati Reds to win.

Not subordinated: A tornado can pick up a house and drop it hundreds of feet away. These are extremely dangerous storms.

Subordinated: *Since* a tornado can pick up a house and drop it hundreds of feet away, these are extremely dangerous storms.

Not subordinated: The case was finally tried. The three men denied having made any confessions. They denied having been involved in any way in the rigging scheme. There was no proof against them.

Subordinated: *When* the case was finally tried, the three men denied having made any confessions. They also denied having been involved in any way in the rigging scheme because there was no proof against them.



## Parallel Structure

In 1946, Winston Churchill traveled to Fulton, Missouri, *to deliver* a speech and *to be present* at the dedication of a bust in his honor. After his speech, an *attractive* and *ample* woman approached the wartime prime minister of England and said, “Mr. Churchill, *I have traveled* over a hundred miles for the unveiling of your bust.” Churchill, who was known *far* and *wide* for his quick wit, responded, “I assure you, in that regard, *I would gladly return the favor.*”

Parallel structure means putting ideas of the same rank in the same grammatical structure. In the above anecdote, the italicized words and phrases show parallel structure. Your writing and speech should have parallel words, phrases, and clauses. Parallel structure gives your writing many admirable strengths, including tempo, stress, balance, and conciseness.

1. *Parallel words* share the same part of speech (such as nouns, adjectives, or verbs) and tense (if the words are verbs).

To some people, traveling by air is *safe, inexpensive, and convenient*.

To others, it’s *dangerous, expensive, and inconvenient*.

You should eat foods that are *nourishing* as well as *tasty*.

2. *Parallel phrases* contain modifiers.

Polyester shirts wash easily, drip-dry quickly, and wear durably.

Nick took the new job to learn more about finance, make important connections, and get a health plan.

“For taking away our Charters, abolishing our laws, and altering the Forms of our Government . . .” (Declaration of Independence)

3. *Parallel clauses* can be complete sentences or dependent clauses.

I came, I saw, I conquered.

“Our chiefs are killed; Looking-Glass is dead; Ta-Hool-Shute is dead.” (Chief Joseph’s surrender speech, 1877)



Sentence *coordination* links ideas of equal importance.



Sentence *subordination* connects two unequal but related clauses with a subordinating conjunction to form a complex sentence.



*Parallel structure* means putting ideas of the same rank in the same grammatical structure.



### QUESTIONS

#### True-False Questions

1. Sentence *coordination* links ideas of equal importance.
2. Each of the coordinating conjunctions has a different meaning.

3. *Subordination* involves using the right word or mark of punctuation to show different relationships between ideas.
4. Correlative conjunctions always come in pairs, such as “either . . . or” and “not only . . . but also.”
5. Link sentences with a subordinating conjunction if you want to show a balance between two independent clauses.
6. Link independent clauses with a semicolon to show that the information in the main clause is not as important as the information in the subordinate clause.
7. Each way to coordinate sentences establishes a slightly different relationship between ideas.
8. There is always a clearly “right” conjunction and punctuation to use when you coordinate ideas.
9. *Coordination* shows the relationship among equal independent clauses; *subordination*, in contrast, shows the relationship between ideas of unequal rank.
10. When you coordinate one part of a sentence to another, you make the dependent clause develop the main clause.
11. If you put the main idea in a dependent clause, your sentence will not be logical.
12. *Subordinate* when you want to link related independent clauses.
13. *Coordinate* when you want to put the most important idea in the main clause.
14. *Parallel words* share the same part of speech (such as nouns, adjectives, or verbs) and tense (if the words are verbs).
15. The following sentence has parallel adjectives:  
Egypt, a long, narrow, fertile strip of land in northeastern Africa, is the only place in the world where pyramids were built.

### Completion Questions

Select the word that best completes each sentence.

1. A lightning bolt lasts a fraction of a second, (so, but) it has enough power—30 million volts—to light up all of Miami.
2. (And, Because) the average thunderstorm is more powerful than an atomic bomb, injuries from these storms are not uncommon.
3. All the following are coordinating conjunctions except *for, but, or (since, and)*.
4. All the following are subordinating conjunctions except *since, because, although (when, nor)*.
5. All the following are conjunctive adverbs except *consequently, furthermore, therefore, (nevertheless, and)*.
6. (*Coordination, Subordination*) is connecting two unequal but related clauses with a subordinating conjunction to form a complex sentence.
7. (*Subordination, Parallel structure*) means putting ideas of the same rank in the same grammatical structure.



8. The film industry changed from silent films to the “talkies” in the late 1920s, (when, after) the success in 1927 of *The Jazz Singer*.
9. Ari is very good about staying in shape: He likes to ride his bicycle, to jog around the track, and (swimming, to go swimming).
10. The committee considered the letter, talked about its major points, and (the unanimous decision was made to ignore it, unanimously decided to ignore it).

### **Multiple-Choice Questions**

Choose the best answer to each question.

1. You can coordinate independent clauses by using all the following methods *except*
  - (a) Coordinating conjunctions
  - (b) Correlative conjunctions
  - (c) A semicolon and a conjunctive adverb
  - (d) Subordinating conjunctions
2. When you coordinate independent clauses, you should decide which ideas can and should be combined and then
  - (a) Select the method of coordination that shows the appropriate relationship between ideas.
  - (b) Use the subordinating conjunction that most clearly expresses your ideas.
  - (c) Add a semicolon to link ideas.
  - (d) String together as many ideas as you can.
3. When you decide how to coordinate or subordinate ideas, you should always consider your
  - (a) Audience
  - (b) Purpose
  - (c) Handwriting
  - (d) Style
4. Which revision best combines ideas?

Ancient Egypt had an abundance of rocks quarried close to the banks of the Nile. These rocks had to be brought from quarries to the building sites.

  - (a) Ancient Egypt had an abundance of rocks quarried close to the banks of the Nile, so these rocks had to be brought from quarries to the building sites.
  - (b) Ancient Egypt had an abundance of rocks quarried close to the banks of the Nile, when these rocks had to be brought from quarries to the building sites.
  - (c) Ancient Egypt had an abundance of rocks quarried close to the banks of the Nile, but these rocks had to be brought from quarries to the building sites.
  - (d) Since ancient Egypt had an abundance of rocks quarried close to the banks of the Nile; these rocks had to be brought from quarries to the building sites.

5. Which revision best combines ideas?

Darrow invented a board game he called “Monopoly.” Monopoly made him a millionaire. This did not happen at first.

- (a) This did not happen at first, but Darrow invented a board game he called “Monopoly.” When Monopoly made him a millionaire.
  - (b) Darrow invented a board game he called “Monopoly,” which made him a millionaire, although not at first.
  - (c) Because Darrow invented a board game he called “Monopoly,” Monopoly made him a millionaire. This did not happen at first.
  - (d) Although Monopoly made him a millionaire, Darrow invented a board game he called “Monopoly,” but this did not happen at first.
6. Which revision best combines ideas?

Parker Brothers turned the game down. They felt it was too complicated to play.

- (a) Parker Brothers turned the game down and they felt it was too complicated to play.
  - (b) Since Parker Brothers turned the game down, they felt it was too complicated to play.
  - (c) When Parker Brothers turned the game down, they felt it was too complicated to play.
  - (d) Parker Brothers turned the game down because they felt it was too complicated to play.
7. Which revision best combines ideas?

Large numbers of people began flooding into southern Florida more than a century ago. The amount of water that once flowed south through the Everglades has been drastically reduced.

- (a) Ever since large numbers of people began flooding into southern Florida more than a century ago, the amount of water that once flowed south through the Everglades has been drastically reduced.
  - (b) Large numbers of people began flooding into southern Florida more than a century ago, but the amount of water that once flowed south through the Everglades has been drastically reduced.
  - (c) Large numbers of people began flooding into southern Florida more than a century ago, yet the amount of water that once flowed south through the Everglades has been drastically reduced.
  - (d) When the amount of water that once flowed south through the Everglades has been drastically reduced, large numbers of people began flooding into southern Florida more than a century ago.
8. Which choice best connects the following sentence?

It took almost a year for three men to sign confessions admitting the series had been fixed. The men were Lefty Williams, Eddie Cicotte, and J. Jackson. The men admitted they were in on the scam.

- (a) It took almost a year for three men—Lefty Williams, Eddie Cicotte, and J. Jackson—to sign confessions admitting the series had been fixed and they were in on it.

- (b) Lefty Williams, Eddie Cicotte, and J. Jackson admitted they were in on the scam when it took almost a year for them to sign confessions admitting the series had been fixed.
  - (c) Since it took almost a year for Lefty Williams, Eddie Cicotte, and J. Jackson to sign confessions admitting the series had been fixed, they admitted they were in on the scam.
  - (d) It took almost a year for Lefty Williams, Eddie Cicotte, and J. Jackson to sign confessions admitting the series had been fixed; however, the men admitted they were in on the scam.
9. Which revision best combines ideas?  
The water declined. The freshwater bird population has declined more than 90 percent since the early 1900s.
- (a) The freshwater bird population has declined more than 90 percent since the early 1900s and the water declined.
  - (b) The water declined because the freshwater bird population has declined more than 90 percent since the early 1900s.
  - (c) The water declined, but the freshwater bird population has declined more than 90 percent since the early 1900s.
  - (d) As a result of the declining water, the freshwater bird population has declined more than 90 percent since the early 1900s.
10. Which revision best combines ideas?  
There are still ample physical reminders of the history of the Native Americans in Florida. Impressive burial mounds, dating back hundreds of years, can be found along many of the rivers, for instance.
- (a) Impressive burial mounds, dating back hundreds of years, can be found along many of the rivers, for instance; there are still ample physical reminders of the history of the Native Americans in Florida.
  - (b) Since there are still ample physical reminders of the history of the Native Americans in Florida, impressive burial mounds, dating back hundreds of years, can be found along many of the rivers, for instance.
  - (c) Although impressive burial mounds, dating back hundreds of years, can be found along many of the rivers, for instance, there are still ample physical reminders of the history of the Native Americans in Florida.
  - (d) There are still ample physical reminders of the history of the Native Americans in Florida; impressive burial mounds, dating back hundreds of years, can be found along many of the rivers, for instance.

### **Further Exercises**

Recombine the sentences in the following paragraphs to create a more logical and graceful style.

1. Lightning often strike twice in the same place. It is more likely to do so. Why is this so? Lightning is an electric current. As with all electric currents or discharges, lightning will follow the path of least resistance. It will take the route that is easiest for it to travel on.

Air is a very poor conductor of electricity. Almost anything else that helps to bridge the gap between the ground and a cloud will offer a more convenient path and thus “attract” the lightning. This includes a high tree, a building (especially one with a metal framework), a tall hill.

2. In 1866, John Styth Pemberton came up with a headache medicine he called “Coca-Cola.” He had taken the wine out of the French Wine Coca. He added some caffeine. The medicine tasted so terrible that at the last minute he added some extract of kola nut. He added a few other oils. He sold it to soda fountains in used bottles. A few weeks later, a man with a terrible headache hauled himself into a drugstore. The man asked for a spoonful of Coca-Cola. The druggist was too lazy to stir the headache remedy into a glass of water. He mixed the syrup in some seltzer water. The seltzer water was closer to where he was standing. The customer liked the carbonated version better than the uncarbonated one. Other customers agreed. From then on, Coca-Cola was served as a carbonated drink.
3. Some time near the beginning of the seventh century, a monk formed some leftover dough into a looped twist. Some sources claim that the twists were meant to represent the folded arms of children at prayer, but even by a considerable stretch of the imagination it is hard to match a pretzel’s shape with the usual position of arms at prayer. The pretzels soon became popular and were often given to children who were faithful in their religious observations. As a result, the baked and salted dough came to be called *pretiola*, the Latin for “little reward.” From *pretiola* to *pretzel* is only a small step.