

CONJUNCTIONS & PARALLEL STRUCTURE

COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS (FANBOYS)

For
And
Nor
But
Or
Yet
So

Coordinating conjunctions imply that two things deserve equal attention.

BASIC RULES

1. When a comma is required, it always comes before the FANBOY.
2. Compound sentences may be connected with a comma and a FANBOY.
Bill went to Wal-Mart, and Jane stayed home.
3. A comma is necessary when using “and” to connect a list of items.
I like to shop at Wal-Mart, Hobby Lobby, and J.C. Penney.
4. Otherwise, no comma is needed.
Bill and Jane went to the store.
5. Avoid illogical coordination. Two ideas MUST be equal and related.
INCORRECT: I have two children, and I was late for work.
6. Avoid overusing FANBOYS.
POOR: I like to go to the lake, and I like to jet ski, and I like to take picnic lunch, and I like to eat it in the shade.

SUBORDINATION CONJUNCTIONS (WEBBITS)

When, while
Even
Because
Although, as
If
Though
Since

Subordinating conjunctions establish a relationship between the dependant clause and the rest of the sentence. The two parts are no longer of equal importance. (i.e. One thing depends on the other somehow.)

BASIC RULES:

1. The least important idea belongs to the subordinate clause.
We didn't have class because the teacher was absent.
Because we didn't have class, the teacher stayed home.

2. Do not use a comma to set off a dependant clause that is absolutely necessary to the mean of the sentence.
Mary only likes to eat pizza when it is hot.
Jonathan went to college because his mother expected him to go.
3. Use a comma if the dependant clause only provides extra information.
When it is too hot, pizza might burn your tongue.
My sister teaches music, while I am tone deaf.
Although it will be difficult, I should be finished with my essay on time.
Since Greg was going to the gym anyway, he offered to give Melissa a ride.
4. Avoid illogical subordination. Make sure the least important point follows the subordinating conjunction.
ILLOGICAL: Jennifer ran out of milk because she went to Hy-Vee.
LOGICAL: Jennifer went to Hy-Vee because she ran out of milk.
5. Don't overuse subordination.

TRANSITIONAL CONJUNCTIONS (HOTSTAFF)

However
Otherwise
Therefore
Second
Third
Also
First
Furthermore

Transitional conjunctions help us move smoothly from one topic to the next.

BASIC RULES:

1. If a HOTSTAFF is the first word in a sentence, put a comma after it.
First, I need a recipe for lasagna.
2. If the HOTSTAFF joins two independent clauses in a compound sentence, use a semicolon + conjunction + comma.
I would like to make lasagna; however, I don't have the recipe.
3. If the HOTSTAFF is merely an interrupter, put commas on either side of it.
Melanie, however, said I could borrow her lasagna recipe.
3. Don't overuse HOTSTAFF, especially however and therefore. The purpose is to get the reader's attention. If the writer cries wolf too often, the readers will stop caring.

PARALLELISM

Making a sentence parallel means that we make sure the parts of the sentence which are doing the same job are in matching form (the same parts of speech).

Words or groups of words linked together with a coordinating conjunction are often doing the same job and need to be parallel.

1. (Nouns) Paul and Diane went to the Styx concert.
2. (Past tense verbs) Cindy learned Spanish and practiced speaking it.
3. (Article + adjective + noun) Bridget bought a blue sweater, a cowboy hat, and a popular novel.
4. (Two gerund phrases) Neither opening the window nor turning off the heat will cool off this classroom.

All clauses in the same sentence should be consistently in active or passive voice.

POOR: Larry took a picture of his sister, and then his mother was photographed by him.

BETTER: Larry took a picture of his sister, and then he photographed his mother.

BETTER: Larry took a picture of his sister and then photographed his mother.