

Paired/Correlative Conjunctions

1. Correlative conjunctions are pairs such as either ... or, neither . . . nor, both ...and & not only ... but also. **These conjunctions connect two balanced clauses, phrases, or words.** The two elements that correlative conjunctions connect are usually similar in length and grammatical structure.

1.1 EITHER...OR [one of the two]

The correlative conjunction “**either...or**” is used to join two positive options (subject, object, verb, adjective, adverb, phrase and clause of parallel structure). Again, it emphasizes the fact that the choice is limited to only the two given options.

For example:

- ❖ I want to paint the house **either** white **or** green.
- ❖ The sound was **either** a firework **or** a gunshot.
- ❖ We can go to **either** Greece **or** Spain for our holiday.
- ❖ Let's **either** go swimming **or** go shopping.
- ❖ We can **either** go to the movies **or** stay inside and watch Netflix.
- ❖ It's my final offer – you can **either** take it **or** leave it.

1.2 NEITHER...NOR [none of the two]

While “**either...or**” pairs up two positive options, “**neither...nor**” pairs up two negative options (subject, object, verb, adjective, adverb, phrase and clause of parallel structure).

For example:

- ❖ **Neither** Norway **nor** Switzerland is in the European Union.
- ❖ The view at the top of mountain was **neither** spectacular **nor** very visible.
- ❖ When it comes to movies, I like **neither** comedies **nor** romances.
- ❖ Marriage is **neither** heaven **nor** hell; it is simply purgatory. (Abraham Lincoln)
- ❖ **Neither** will the workers go off strike **nor** negotiate until they receive a higher pay.

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A common grammatical mistake that occurs when using the correlative conjunction “either ... or” and “neither...nor” is subject-verb agreement. When two (or more) items (subjects) are joined by the word conjunction and serve as the subject of the sentence, the number of the verb (i.e. singular or plural) always follows the last of the options. Multiple singular options do not create a plural noun.

For example:

- ❖ **Either** Crystal **or** Julia **wants** to come with us to the festival. (The verb should be “wants,” not “want”)
- ❖ **Either** Courtney **or** her friends **are** coming to pick me up. (The verb “are” follows the second item in the pair of subjects.)
- ❖ **Neither** Bithy **nor** Reeti **has** broken the glass.

Special Note: When **either ... or** & **neither ... nor** begin two independent clauses, we must use a comma before **or** & **nor**.

Example:

- ❖ **Either** your father will pick you up, **or** you’ll get a ride home with a friend.
- ❖ **Either** you stay, **or** I leave.
- ❖ **Neither** does he understand, **nor** does he care.

1.3 BOTH...AND

This correlative conjunction is used to join two equal items (subjects, verbs, objects, adjectives, adverbs etc.) together. Subject connected by **both ... and** will always be plural.

- ❖ **Both** rugby **and** football **are** popular in France.
- ❖ **Both** English **and** Welsh **are** spoken in Wales.
- ❖ The hurricane was devastating **both** emotionally **and** economically.
- ❖ We went to **both** the service **and** the reception afterwards.
- ❖ I don’t know why, but **both** Jane **and** Colin have stopped talking to me.

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Also note that we use **both ... and** when we want to put emphasis on two elements that are true in a sentence. We could also use the coordinating conjunction **and**, but it doesn't achieve the same *emphatic effect*.

Compare:

- ❖ “This house is large **and** cozy.”
- ❖ “This house is **both** large **and** cozy.”

- ❖ “She cleaned her room **and** washed the dishes.”
- ❖ “She **both** cleaned her room **and** washed the dishes.”

- ❖ “My mother **and** father are bookworms.”
- ❖ “**Both** my mother **and** my father are bookworms.”

In the above examples, the sentences using **both ... and** are **more emphatic**. Note, however, that the **both ... and** construction doesn't join independent clauses, only words or phrases.

1.4 NOT ONLY...BUT ALSO

We use **not only ... but also** to emphasize **an additional element in the sentence**, especially when its occurrence seems contradictory or surprising in light of what we already know.

For example:

- ❖ “This house is **not only** large **but also** cozy.” (The speaker believes that large houses are not usually cozy.)
- ❖ “She **not only** cleaned her room, **but she also** washed the dishes.” (The speaker is surprised that she did both chores.)
- ❖ “**Not only** is she an award-winning singer, **but she also** runs track.” (The speaker is impressed that she is able to do these two unrelated activities.)

Note that when **but** begins the second independent clause, the subject comes between it and **also**, and a comma (,) will come before **but**.

For Example:

- ❖ **Not only** did we get lost, **but we also** ran out of gas with no gas station in sight.
- ❖ **Not only** is he smart, **but he also** is talented.