

MPC English & Study Skills Center

Conjunctions: Correlative

There are four types of conjunctions: Coordinating, Subordinating, Conjunctive Adverbs, and Correlative Conjunctions. **See also** the individual handouts for each of these types.

Correlative conjunctions are different from the other types because they work in pairs, joining words, phrases, or clauses that are equal (noun to noun, for example).

‡ There are only five pairs to remember:

- both. . .and
- either. . .or
- neither. . .nor
- not only. . .but (also)
- whether. . .or

‡ The conjunctions must go directly in front of the words, phrases or clauses being joined.

Two subjects: **Both** Mary **and** Tom stayed late.

Two verbs: Jason will **either** go to MPC **or** take a job for a year.

Two phrases: **Not only** in the morning **but also** in the afternoon, I nap.

Two independent clauses: **Either** I will stay home, **or** I will go to work.

Note: Be sure to separate **independent clauses** with a comma, the same as with a coordinating conjunction.

‡ Because **both. . .and** adds ideas together, a plural verb is necessary when subjects are joined.

Both the dog **and** the cat are very friendly.

‡ When **either. . .or**, **neither. . .nor**, **not only. . .but also**, and **whether. . .or** join subjects, the verb matches the second subject only.

Either the TV **or** the neighbors are making a lot of noise.

Either the neighbors **or** the TV is making a lot of noise.

Neither Stephen **nor** the girls are in the house.

Neither the girls **nor** Stephen is in the house.

Not only Kim **but also** Kim's parents are coming for a visit.

Not only Kim's parents **but also** Kim is coming for a visit.

Whether the dogs **or** the cat stays at home hasn't been decided.

Whether the cat **or** the dogs stay at home hasn't been decided.

‡ **Whether . . .or** is somewhat different from the other correlative conjunctions. In the preceding sentence “Whether the dogs or the cat stays home” is a **noun clause** (a dependent clause) that is the subject for the verb “hasn’t been decided.” Also, a shortened form with “not” is often used with negatives.

Whether I work **or** I don’t work, I still want to get paid.

Whether I work **or not**, I still want to get paid.

Note: In both of the preceding sentences, the **whether. . .or** clause is an **adverb clause** (a dependent clause).

‡ **Neither. . .nor** means “not one and not the other,” so it is important to avoid adding “not” in the sentence, or this will result in a double negative. However, with **not only. . .but also**, it is correct to have an additional “not” to indicate a negative. These sentences have basically the same message:

Neither do I like Bob, **nor** do I want to see him.

Not only do I not like Bob, **but also** I do not want to see him.

‡ When **neither. . .nor** and **not only. . .but also** are used to join independent clauses, the subject and verb after the negative parts of the paired conjunctions must be reversed, often requiring the addition of a form of **do** (do, does, did).

Neither do I want to study, **nor** do I want to work.

*Both **neither** and **nor** include the negative “not,” so the subjects and verbs in both clauses have to be reversed.*

Not only does Harry purr a lot, **but also** he sleeps 20 hours a day.

*Only **not only** includes the negative “not,” so the subject and verb only in the first clause need to be reversed.*