**Ministry of Higher Education and**

**Scientific Research/University of Tikrit**

**College of Education for Humanities**

**Department of English**

**Third Stage**

**Evening and Morning Studies**

# Correlative conjunctions

**By**

**Asst. Professor**

**Marwan Mizher Sahab**

**Introduction**

Correlative conjunctions are one of the three types of conjunctions. (The others are subordinating conjunctions and coordinating conjunctions. More on them in a minute.) Like all conjunctions, correlative conjunctions link words and phrases together in sentences, indicating the relationship (and in some cases, the lack of relationship) between them.

You use correlative conjunctions in your speech all the time. If you've ever said something like "I could play **either** soccer **or** basketball next season," you've used correlative conjunctions. In your writing, correlative conjunctions are a handy tool to make your sentences stronger and more clear.

## What is a correlative conjunction?

Correlative conjunctions are conjunctions used to illustrate how two words or phrases within a sentence relate to each other. Correlative conjunctions always come in pairs.

Though they can illustrate a correlation between the two words or phrases, they don't necessarily have to. In many cases, the words or phrases linked by a correlative conjunction can be discussed independently of one another. In these cases, joining them with a correlative conjunction makes your writing more concise and emphasizes that the two things being discussed happen in close succession, at the same time, or as a result of the same cause, or that they're both distinct possibilities or outcomes of a shared cause or starting point.

Take a look at these sentences that use correlative conjunctions:

*We could **either** hike up the mountain **or** swim in the lake this afternoon.*

***Whether** you bike **or** drive to work, you'll need to show your parking pass.*

***Not only** did my boyfriend buy me a Nintendo Switch, **but** he also bought me a bunch of games!*

Before we go deeper into correlative conjunctions, let's do a quick refresher on conjunctions as a part of speech. Conjunctions are words that link phrases, clauses, and words together in sentences. Words like **and** and **but** are conjunctions. When you use a conjunction in a sentence, the words or phrases it links need to have parallel structures. Here's an example of a conjunction at work:

*She drives slowly **and** cautiously.*

"She drives slow and cautiously" is incorrect, as are "She drives slowly and cautious" and "She drives slow and cautious." In this example, the adverbs "slowly" and "cautiously" both describe the verb "drives," and the conjunction **and** links them together to give the reader the full picture: The subject ("she") doesn't just drive, but drives at a low speed and in a cautious manner.

**And** can be a correlative conjunction when it's paired with another conjunction like **both.** Take a look at this example:

***Both** my cat **and** my dog like bacon-flavored treats.*

Like socks, correlative conjunctions **always** come in pairs. That's their defining characteristic; if a conjunction *doesn't* need a partner for its sentence to make sense, it's not a correlative conjunction. The most common correlative conjunction pairs include:

- either/or
- neither/nor
- such/that
- whether/or
- not only/but also
- both/and
- as many/as
- no sooner/than
- rather/than

Let’s take a look at a few example sentences:

***Either*** *you’re with me* ***or*** *you’re against me.*

***Such*** *is the intensity of the pollen outside* ***that*** *I can’t leave the house.*

*My parents went to* ***both*** *Hawaii* ***and*** *Bali last year.*

*She would* ***no sooner*** *cheat on an exam* ***than*** *falsify her credentials.*

*They would* ***rather*** *go to the movies* ***than*** *the mall.*

## What does a correlative conjunction do?

Correlative conjunctions create pairs of equal elements. By elements, we mean words and phrases within a sentence that are the same part of speech or serve the same function. This could mean two nouns, two adjectives, two verbs, or two of the same kind of phrase. Here are a few examples of correlative conjunctions in sentences:

*Because of the bad weather, the class missed **both** their history **and** English exams.*

*They **not only** ate all the donuts **but also** drank all the coffee.*

*I wasn't sure **whether** the play was disjointed **or** avant-garde.*

Correlative conjunctions are just one type of conjunction. The other types are **subordinating conjunctions** and **coordinating conjunctions.**

**Coordinating conjunctions** are words that join two elements of equal grammatical rank and syntactic importance. They can join two verbs, two nouns, two adjectives, two phrases, or two independent clauses. In our example above, the word **and** acts as a coordinating conjunction. When most people think of conjunctions, they think of coordinating conjunctions. The seven coordinating conjunctions can be remembered by using the acronym FANBOYS:

- for
- and
- nor
- but
- or

- yet
- so

**Subordinating conjunctions** are conjunctions that link independent clauses to dependent clauses. By doing this, the subordinating conjunction demonstrates the relationship between the clauses, which is often a cause-and-effect relationship or a contrast. Here's a quick example:

*He was late to work **because** there was traffic.*

Common subordinating conjunctions include:

- because
- since
- while
- whereas
- though
- although
- as

## When should you use correlative conjunctions?

Use correlative conjunctions when you have two distinct yet connected concepts in a sentence. If you and your roommate both tend to wake up early, an efficient sentence to communicate this is "**Both** my roommate **and** I wake up early."

Correlative conjunctions can be helpful in transition sentences. Here's an example of a short paragraph featuring a transition sentence:

*I wasn't hired at any of the companies I'd applied to. **Neither** my experience **nor** my skill set seemed to impress the interviewers. So I'm going to explore opportunities in a completely different field.*

You can remove the second sentence and the paragraph will still make sense. However, that middle sentence adds detail and context. Here's another example of correlative conjunctions in a transition sentence:

*My goal is to earn a PhD. **Whether** I get into my dream school **or** I get accepted somewhere else, that's my plan. After that, who knows what I'll do?*

When you're using correlative conjunctions, subject-verb agreement is a must. All this means is that the verb in the sentence is conjugated to match the noun or pronoun that is its subject. Take a look at this example:

***Either** Reyna pushes the button **or** Abed pushes it.*

***Either** Reyna push the button **or** Abed pushed it.*

How to use correlative conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions **always** come in pairs. Many of these words can be used without their correlative partners, and when this is the case, the word isn't acting as a correlative conjunction. Here's an example:

*She was **such** an amazing cook.*

In this sentence, the word "such" is an adverb because it's modifying the adjective "amazing" by amplifying it. But the word "such" can also be a correlative conjunction—when it's paired with the word "that."

*She was **such** an amazing cook **that** she won over even the pickiest eaters.*

See how the pair of correlative conjunctions demonstrates the cause and effect in this sentence? You can also split the sentence in two:

*She was such an amazing cook. She won over even the pickiest eaters.*

We can infer the cause and effect here, but linking these sentences with correlative conjunctions makes the relationship between her cooking and her picky eater–converting skills clear.

Take a look at more example sentences that contain correlative conjunctions:

*My brother is **either** playing video games **or** writing music on his PC.*

*We received **neither** the package **nor** the invoice.*

*Jenna **not only** plays the violin, **but also** sings professionally.*

*We invited **both** the Rodriguezes **and** the Losapios to dinner.*

*There were **as many** applicants **as** there were seats in the program.*

*I could **no sooner** answer him **than** he called me back.*

*The kids would **rather** eat ramen **than** scrambled eggs.*

Every single one of these sentences can be reworded to remove the correlative conjunctions and still make sense, but they might get longer or lose some clarity. For example, we can rework the last example to "The kids would eat scrambled eggs, but would prefer ramen." No meaning is lost, but the version with the correlative conjunctions emphasizes the kids' preference for ramen by placing it ahead of the scrambled eggs.