

Coordinating Conjunctions (FANBOYS)

Coordinating conjunctions connect two equal words, phrases, or clauses.

FANBOYS

There are seven coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. A useful strategy to remember them is to memorize the acronym **FANBOYS**:

F	A	N	B	O	Y	S
o	n	o	u	r	e	o
r	d	r	t		t	

Joining Independent Clauses

An independent clause can stand by itself as a complete sentence. To join two independent clauses, writers often use a comma followed by a coordinating conjunction. The basic structure of a sentence that uses a coordinating conjunction is as follows:

Subject + verb + object, [*coordinating conjunction*] subject + verb + object.

Joining two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction creates a *compound sentence*.

Examples: I like football, *and* I like hockey.

The directions are complicated, *but* I am starting to understand them.

In the first example, the coordinating conjunction is *and*. It separates the two independent clauses: “I like football” and “I like hockey.” In the second example, the coordinating conjunction is *but*. It separates the two independent clauses: “The directions are complicated” and “I am starting to understand them.”

In both examples, there is an independent clause on both sides of the coordinating conjunction, and a comma is required before the coordinating conjunction.

Joining Words and Phrases

Coordinating conjunctions can connect two words. When just two words are connected using a coordinating conjunction, no comma is needed.

Examples: My favorite foods are burritos **and** sushi.
I will eat either a hamburger **or** a hotdog.

Coordinating conjunctions can also join more than two items. In a series that lists more than two items, the coordinating conjunction precedes the final item. A comma should be placed before the coordinating conjunction.

Examples: I recently bought new straps, pedals, **and** toe clips for my bike.
Jaime wants a tablet, a sword, **or** a cell phone for his birthday.

Coordinating conjunctions can also join phrases. When two phrases are connected using a coordinating conjunction, no comma is needed.

Examples: I want to study at my university library **or** at the local coffee shop.
Phil was entranced by the dancer's stage presence **and** graceful movements.

Activity

Insert commas and coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) when appropriate to complete the sentences.

1. My favorite desserts include cookies, cheesecake ____ tiramisu.
2. I wanted to spend my entire summer reading books _____ I had to get a job.
3. I finished my homework _____ my mom let me go outside.
4. I could not play outside _____ I had to study for a test.
5. I want to eat at the new Chicago pizza joint _____ at a steakhouse.
6. I have no money _____ I keep shopping.
7. I have neither done the dishes _____ the laundry.
8. We should bring either pizza _____ cake to the party.

Answer Key for Activity

1. My favorite desserts include cookies, cheesecake, **and** tiramisu.
2. I wanted to spend my entire summer reading books, **but** I had to get a job.
3. I finished my homework, **so** my mom let me go outside.
4. I could not play outside, **for** I had to study for a test.
5. I want to eat at the new Chicago pizza joint **or** at a steakhouse.
6. I have no money, **but** I keep shopping.
7. I have neither done the dishes **nor** the laundry.
8. We should bring either pizza **or** cake to the party.