conjunctions and adverbs: structure and punctuation

Conjunctions (see pages 200–206) make **grammatical** and **meaning** connections – they join clauses into sentences, and show the relationship between them. Some conjunctions:

and, but, or, so, before, after, when, as soon as, because, since, although, if, that

When a conjunction comes between two clauses, there is normally either **no punctuation** (especially if the clauses are short) or a **comma (,)** before it in writing.

*I had supper **before** I phoned Jean.* *I was very unhappy, **so** I decided to change my job.*

Adverbs can make **meaning** connections, but they do **not** make **grammatical** connections: they do not join clauses into sentences. Some adverbs:

however, then, therefore, meanwhile, consequently, in fact, also, as a result, on the other hand, indeed

When an **adverb** comes between two clauses, there is normally either a **full stop (.)** or a **semi-colon (;)** before it in careful writing, because the clauses are still separate.

*I had supper; **then** I phoned Jean.* OR *I had supper. **Then** I phoned Jean.*
(better than *I had supper, then I phoned Jean.*)
*I was unhappy; **therefore** I moved away.* OR *I was unhappy. **Therefore** I moved away.*

1 Put a comma, a semi-colon or nothing between the words in italics.

1 One person asked a *question then* there was a long silence.
2 We will ship your *order as soon as* we have received supplies from the manufacturer.
3 The brakes need *attention also*, there is a problem with the steering.
4 It was bitterly *cold and* snow was forecast.
5 It was not possible to make a *decision because* the necessary information was not available.
6 A is greater than B, and B is greater than C *therefore* A is greater than C.
7 Not enough people bought *tickets so* the concert was cancelled.

but* and *however ***But*** is a **conjunction; *however*** is an **adverb**. Note the difference in punctuation **before** these words.

*It was cold, **but** it was pleasant.*
*It was cold. **However**, it was pleasant.* OR *It was cold; **however**, it was pleasant.*
(better than *It was cold, however ...*)

Note that we also put a comma **after** *however*.

2 Rewrite the sentences, changing *but* to *however* or vice versa.

▸ Alice was clearly the best candidate, but she did not get the job.
Alice was clearly the best candidate; however, she did not get the job.

▸ The audience was small; however, they were clearly appreciative.
The audience was small, but they were clearly appreciative.

1 She has considerable musical ability; however, her technique is poor.
.....

2 Nobody liked him, but everybody agreed that he was a good manager.
.....

3 It is a reliable and economical car, but its performance is disappointing.
.....

4 Simpson was not playing at his best; however, he managed to win the match.
.....

5 The house is in reasonable condition, but the roof will need some repairs.
.....

3 **Rewrite the sentences using the adverbs and adverbial expressions in the box. Be careful with the punctuation.**

also	consequently	on the other hand	then	there

1 The bank is very inefficient, and the staff are remarkably rude.
.....
2 We bought a map before we set off to explore the town.
.....
3 There had been no investment for years, so the railways were in a terrible state.
.....
4 The people are friendly, but it is difficult to get to know them really well.
.....
5 We walked down to the beach area, where we found the men we were looking for.
.....

4 **Complete these sentences any way you like.**

1 I like .....; however, ...
2 ..... can be useful; on the other hand, ...
3 ..... is .....; in addition, ...

position Conjunctions always begin clauses. Adverbs can often go in different places in a clause (but not between the verb and the object). If an adverb interrupts the normal word order of a clause, it may be separated by two commas.

He confessed to 114 murders, but the police did not believe his story.
(BUT NOT ... ~~*the police but did not believe his story.*~~)
He confessed to 114 murders; ***however****, the police did not believe his story.*
He confessed to 114 murders; the police, ***however****, did not believe his story.*
He confessed to 114 murders; the police did not, ***however****, believe his story.*
He confessed to 114 murders; the police did not believe his story, ***however****.*
(BUT NOT ... ~~*the police did not believe, however, his story.*~~)

5 **Rewrite the sentences, putting the expressions *in italics* in other places.**

1 He had little talent; *on the other hand*, his sister was a brilliant musician.
.....
2 The hospital was seriously understaffed; *in spite of that*, the standard of care was excellent.
.....
3 Andrew overslept; *as a result*, the whole family missed the plane.
.....

'The past is not dead.
In fact, it's not even past.'
(*William Faulkner*)

'It is forbidden to kill; therefore all murderers are punished unless they kill in large numbers and to the sound of trumpets.'
(*Voltaire*)

'The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.'
(*G B Shaw*)

'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.'
(*Margaret Mead*)

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linking clauses with conjunctions and adverbs (continued)

6 GRAMMAR IN A TEXT. **Put commas („) or semi-colons (;) before the numbered words.**

In the early years we were breaking new ground [1]and there were naturally a number of difficulties [2]however, business was for the most part excellent. Credit was easily available [3]indeed, the banks were only too anxious to offer loans to new companies [4]in addition, interest rates rarely went above 4% through the whole of the period. Costs were low [5]also, there was an almost inexhaustible demand for our product. Staffing was sometimes problematic [6]since a large proportion of the labour force was semi-skilled at best [7]and experienced and well-qualified managers were by no means easy to find. This meant that there was a rapid turnover of employees [8]consequently quality sometimes suffered [9]although customers were not in general highly critical. Now, twenty years later, conditions have changed dramatically [10]and the overall picture is very different indeed [11]however, I am happy to say that despite everything we are still managing to remain profitable.

NOTES

Commas are often used before conjunctions to separate longer or more complicated clauses (see page 254). Shorter pairs of clauses are often connected without commas. Compare:

Joseph went home because he was tired.
Joseph decided to go home earlier than he had planned, because he was beginning to have trouble keeping his eyes open.

contrast Commas are particularly common before conjunctions expressing contrast.

Ann is very sociable, ***while*** *her sister is quite shy.*
He kept shivering, ***although*** *it was a warm day.*

And **adverbs** expressing contrast often have commas **after** them.

They were becoming increasingly discouraged. ***However,*** *they continued walking.*
Income is satisfactory; ***on the other hand,*** *expenditure has increased alarmingly.*
Yet*, at the beginning of a clause, is a* **conjunction***, and is not followed by a comma.*
It was cold, yet it was pleasant. (NOT ... ~~*yet, it was pleasant.*~~)

clause position Clauses that begin sentences are usually separated by commas. Compare:

As soon as it boils, *turn down the heat.* *Turn down the heat* ***as soon as it boils.***

punctuation with no conjunction When two main clauses are joined without a conjunction, they can be punctuated with a semi-colon, a colon or a dash, but not a comma.

We had no idea where he was; he had completely disappeared.
(NOT ~~*We had no idea where he was, he had completely disappeared.*~~)
She had one basic principle: she was always right.
We will send your order as soon as possible – this will probably be in early July.

one-clause sentences Sometimes a single clause with a conjunction is written as a separate sentence. Some people feel this is incorrect, but it is normal in question-and-answer sequences, or when a writer wishes to give extra emphasis to a clause.

Why are we in financial trouble? ***Because*** *the banks lent money to the wrong people.*
He was charming. ***But*** *he was totally without a conscience.*

For *however* as a conjunction (e.g. ***However*** *we travel, we have to go through London*), see page 243.