

INSTRUCTOR: Conjunctions. Conjunctions are used to connect words and groups of words in a sentence. There are two major types of conjunctions-- coordinating and subordinating.

Coordinating conjunctions join equivalent words or word groups. There are seven coordinating conjunctions in English, and you can remember them with the acronym FANBOYS-- "for," "and," "not," "but," "or," "yet," "so." In the sentence "do you prefer apples or oranges?" the conjunction "or" joins the two nouns. In the sentence "the sleigh went over the river and through the woods," the conjunction "and" joins the two prepositional phrases.

Coordinating conjunctions can also join independent clauses, which are word groups that can stand on their own as sentences. A comma and the coordinating conjunction "so" join these two sentences. "The human body keeps all the iron it digests, so the only way we lose iron is through bleeding." Note that a comma is needed before the coordinating conjunction to make the combined sentence grammatically correct.

Subordinating conjunctions make one independent clause subordinate to, or dependent on, another. Some examples of subordinating conjunctions include "if," "after," "although," and "unless."

Let's take another look at the two independent clauses. The subordinating conjunction "because" makes the clause on the left subordinate. "Because the body keeps all the iron it digests, the only way we lose iron is through bleeding." Note that a comma is needed after an opening subordinate clause.

If the independent clause comes first, however, a comma is not always needed. "The only way we lose iron is through bleeding because the body keeps all the iron it digests." A comma should be used only when an independent clause is followed by a contrasting subordinate clause. "Supplements usually help people with low iron levels, although a change in diet may be just as helpful."

Remember, coordinating conjunctions join equivalent words or word groups. Subordinating conjunctions make one independent clause subordinate to, or dependent on, another.