

Sentence Development Tutorial:

Tutorial #18:
Correlatives

Writing Center

English 800 Center

All notes and exercises should be done on separate sheets of paper, which you will bring to your conference with an instructor in the center.

As you work through the tutorial, make sure to see an instructional aide at the front desk in the Writing Center or English 800 Center if you have any questions or difficulties.

Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions, also known as **correlatives**, add stylistic sophistication and variation to your writing. Based on the coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS), correlatives allow you to show relationships of addition, contrast, and negation between ideas. Correlatives lend a certain elegance to writing. Unlike coordinating conjunctions, correlatives are always used in pairs. Consider these two famous sentences, which use correlatives:

- I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.
- My fellow citizens of the world: Ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

Since both Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and President John F. Kennedy delivered these sentences before crowded audiences—King’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech and Kennedy’s 1961 inaugural address—it will not surprise you that correlative structures are particularly pleasing to the ear, and thus are very effective in speeches. Because they alert the reader (and listener) that an important point is to follow, correlatives are an effective strategy to use in argumentation. Because they always come in parallel pairs, correlatives lend a grace and rhythm to writing that other methods of sentence combining do not.

| Logical Relationship | Correlative Pair | Example |
|---|-------------------------|---|
| Choice or option | Either ... or | I want either the pie or the ice cream for dessert. |
| Equal negation of two elements | Neither ... nor | I want neither the pie nor the ice cream for dessert. |
| Addition—emphasis on the second element | Not only ... but (also) | I want not only the pie but also the ice cream for dessert. |
| Contrast—emphasis on the second element | Not ... but | I want not the pie but the ice cream for dessert. |
| Addition—emphasis on both elements | Both ... and | Both the pie and the ice cream are home made. |

The trick to using correlatives is that they must join parallel structures; that is, the same type of grammatical structure must follow each half of the correlative. Let’s look at our two famous examples. The grammatical units being joined are italicized.

- I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will be judged not *by the color of their skin* but *by the content of their character*.

- My fellow citizens of the world: Ask not *what America will do for you*, but *what together we can do for the freedom of man*.

Note that in King's case, both *not* and *but* are followed by prepositional phrases, while in Kennedy's case, both *not* and *but* are followed by noun clauses. Even if you don't know the name of the grammatical structure, you can see, for example, that *what America will do for you* and *what together we can do for the freedom of man* sound and look similar in that both are clauses (they have a subject and a verb) and both are headed by *what*.

When correlatives are misplaced in a sentence, they lose their power and grace. Consider the following sentence:

- She not only *is an expert on thermal dynamics*, but also *Cajun cooking*.

We can tell the sentence is not parallel because *not only* is followed by a verb phrase while *but* is followed by a noun and its modifier. We can make the elements parallel in two ways. First, we could change the second element to follow the pattern of the first:

- She not only *is an expert on thermal dynamics*, but also *is an expert on Cajun cooking*.

Now both elements are verb phrases and so the sentence is parallel. However, this sentence doesn't capture the grace that correlatives boast because too many words are repeated. The sentence has become a mouthful. The second option for making the elements parallel is a better choice:

- She is an expert on not only *thermal dynamics*, but also *Cajun cooking*.

Here both elements are nouns. Notice that we have eliminated the repetition of *is an expert on*; the result is a much leaner, more graceful, powerful, and effective sentence.

Checklist:

When using correlatives, look for the following to make sure the sentences are as graceful and as powerful as they can be..

- Are the correlatives joining grammatical elements that are parallel (that match each other)?
- Can any words that are needlessly repeated within the joined elements be eliminated?
- Is the correct logical relationship being indicated?

Exercise 1

Instructions: In some of the following sentences, one or both of the correlatives have been misplaced. Put the correlatives in their proper places. Refer to the previous checklist for help.

1. My sister not only ordered a Big Mac but also a cheeseburger with extra cheese.
2. My dog is both intelligent and beautiful.
3. Either the union can fight for a pay raise for entry-level employees, or lobby for a better retirement package for long-time executives.
4. I picked out of the line up not the real perpetrator but I identified the undercover cop.
5. Neither her words nor her point were understandable.
6. The sisters were not twins, but they were best friends.
7. Not only is the law unconstitutional but also it is idiotic.
8. To those struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves -- not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right.¹
9. Neither natural disasters or out-and-out war nor will the right to privacy stop television newscasters from getting the story.
10. The Oakland Raiders beat not only the Green Bay Packers but they beat the sportscaster's predictions as well.

Exercise 2

Instructions: In some of the following sentences, one or both of the correlatives have been misplaced. Put the correlatives in their proper places. Refer to the previous checklist for help.

1. The teachers there are not only knowledgeable but also they care about the students.
2. My mom not only forgot to buy groceries but she also didn't bake any bread.
3. Not strength but resistance is the key to a successful journey through the outback.
4. His efforts seemed focused not on working with the students but on telling them what to do and expecting them to do it right.
5. Either we will find a way to deal with the problem or we will have to try something else.
6. Barbara was not only a selfish person, but was also often cruel and unfeeling.
7. Marco insists on not only a bottle of wine with dinner but also an after dinner drink with dessert.
8. They both were not teachers but administrators who know very little about the classroom.
9. Josh liked not only horror movies but also good detective novels.
10. I not only felt the great joy of becoming a father on the day of my son's birth but also with each new day that I saw him playing and fussing and smiling up at me from his crib.

Exercise 3

Instructions: Write five sentences of your own; in each, use a different correlative pair. (Refer to the chart at the beginning of this tutorial for help.)

Exercise 4

Instructions:

1. Review a classroom essay that you are working on, and try to incorporate correlatives into your own writing.
2. Look back at the principles and exercises in this tutorial and make notes on a separate sheet of paper. You will bring these notes and the essay to your conference.
3. Make an appointment for a conference with an instructor in the Writing Center (18-104) or English 800 Center (18-102). To make this appointment, stop by the Centers or call (650) 574-6436. During this appointment, the professor will make sure you understand the concepts covered in this tutorial, answer any questions that you might have, review your answers to these exercises, and check to see if you can incorporate the skill into your writing.

Reminder:

For this appointment, bring

- any notes about the tutorial that you have taken
- your completed tutorial exercises
- and the essay