

You already know what a conjunction is. It is a word used to connect two words, phrases or clauses. Examples are: and, but, because, when, while, since, if etc. There are mainly two types of conjunctions: coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions.

Most conjunctions are simple one word structures, but some conjunctions come in pairs and then they are called correlative conjunctions. Most correlative conjunctions are coordinating conjunctions. Examples are: either...or, neither...nor, not only...but also and both...and.

When it comes to correlative conjunctions, you have to use both parts of the conjunction in different places to make them work.

He wants either the chocolates or the cake.

He said that he would like to have both the chocolates and the cake.

You can have neither the cake nor the ice-cream.

I have not yet decided whether I will have the cake or the ice-cream.

He ate not only the chocolates but also the ice-cream.

While using a correlative conjunction, you have to make sure that the two parts of the conjunction go before words of the same kind. For example, if you use a noun after neither, you have to use another noun after nor. Students sometimes incorrectly mix the structures.

He is neither intelligent nor diligent. (Here we use adjectives (intelligent and diligent) after neither and nor.)

They both sang and danced. (Here we use verbs after both and and.)

Neither the engineer nor his colleagues could detect the problem.

Negative correlatives (e.g. neither...nor, scarcely...when) can go at the beginning of a sentence and then we use an inverted word order.

Study the examples given below.

He neither wrote nor called. OR Neither did he write nor did he call. (Note that when a negative word comes at the beginning of the sentence, the auxiliary verb comes before the subject. If the original sentence doesn't have an auxiliary verb we use form of do.)

He not only smokes but also drinks.

Not only does he smoke but he also drinks.