On the other hand, while and whereas

These words or phrases have similar uses, but the grammar is not quite the same. **On the other hand** is a conjunctive adverb. It is used to compare two situations or two people and to show that there is an important difference between them.

- In many Middle Eastern countries, it is quite common for parents to find suitable brides and grooms for their children. **On the other hand**, arranged marriages are unusual in the West.
- I like living in the city. My wife, **on the other hand**, prefers the countryside.

The same idea can be expressed using the conjunctions **while** and **whereas**.

- **While** arranged marriages are quite unusual in the West, they are quite common in many Middle Eastern countries.
- I like living in the city, **while / whereas** my wife prefers the countryside.
- **While / whereas** English has just five vowel sounds, some languages have 30 or more.
- There are just five vowel sounds in English. **On the other hand**, some languages have 30 or more.

As you can see, there is an important difference between these three sentence connectors. **While** and **whereas** are conjunctions. They connect two clauses. **On the other hand** is not a conjunction. It goes at the beginning of the second clause and is usually separated from the rest of the sentence with a comma.

It can also go in the middle of the sentence. In that case we use two commas to set it off.

- In many western countries, the elderly live in retirement homes run by health professionals. In India, **on the other hand**, they live with their children and grandchildren.

Other conjunctive adverbs that can be used to express same or similar ideas are: **nevertheless, however** and **in contrast**.