Quick Clues to English
LBCC Developmental Studies

Coordinating Conjunctions

A **coordinating conjunction** joins words or ideas of the same importance.

> When a coordinating conjunction joins two or more **independent clauses**, place a **comma** before the coordinating conjunction.

Note: An **independent clause** must have a **subject** and a **verb**.

For example:

Independent clause: John went to the mall.

Independent clause: He spent all of his pay.

Independent clause: He was there all day.

Combined: John went to the mall**, and** he spent all of his pay.

Combined: John went to the mall, he was there all day**, and** he spent all of his pay. (Series of clauses)

> **Do not** use a comma before a coordinating conjunction when it only joins two words or phrases. Notice that a comma is used when the coordinating conjunction comes at the end of a series.

> John **and** Mary went to the mall. (compound subject)
>
> John went **and** shopped at the mall. (compound verb)
>
> John went to the mall, bank, **and** grocery store. (series of words)
> John shopped at the mall, spent all of his pay, **and** was there all day. (series of phrases)

Coordinating Conjunctions

A mnemonic (memory) device to remember coordinating conjunctions is the acronym **BOYSFAN**, which comes from the first letter of each of the following words.

But
Or
Yet
So
For
And
Nor

Each coordinating conjunction expresses a certain meaning.

Use *and* **to show addition**:

We went to Canada**, and** we saw a moose.

Use *but* **or** *yet* **to show contrast:**

We went to Canada**, but** we did not see a moose.
We went to Canada**, yet** we did not see a moose.

Use *or* **to show an alternative:**

We could go to Canada**, or** we could go to Washington.

Use *nor* **to show a negative alternative:**

We could not go to Canada**, nor** could we go to Washington.

Note: Notice how the subject (*we*) and the helping verb (*could*)
reverse positions following **nor.**

Use *for* **to mean because:**

We could not go to Canada**, for** we did not have enough
vacation days.

Be careful: A comma alone **cannot** join two independent clauses and
causes a run-on sentence called a comma splice.

INCORRECT: We went to Canada**,** we saw a moose.

CORRECT: We went to Canada**, and** we saw a moose.