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CHAPTER 14

Conjunctive Adverbs

SECTION 14.1 INTRODUCTION

Earlier chapters discuss coordinating and subordinating conjunctions for tying together sentences. This chapter discusses a third type of word used for tying together sentences: **conjunctive adverbs**. Do not let the complicated-sounding term “conjunctive adverb” intimidate you. You will see in the following sections that conjunctive adverbs are easy to use for expressing relationships between sentences. They are powerful tools for imparting more cohesiveness to your sentences and more coherence to your paragraphs. You will use the conjunctive adverb *therefore* in the following exercise.

Exercise

Rewrite the first sentence with the period replaced by a semicolon. Then write the second sentence right after the semicolon, but do not capitalize the first letter (*t*) of the second sentence because the semicolon joins the two sentences into one sentence.

Last night 18 inches of snow fell on the city, making most streets impassable.

Therefore, schools and government buildings will be closed until further notice.

SECTION 14.2 JOINING SENTENCES WITH A SEMICOLON, A CONJUNCTIVE ADVERB, AND A COMMA

Here is the answer to the above exercise.

Last night 18 inches of snow fell on the city, making most streets impassable; therefore, schools and government buildings will be closed until further notice.

The conjunctive adverb *therefore* expresses the relationship between the ideas in the two sentence, namely, that the situation involves a cause-effect relationship: heavy snow *caused* the closings. Because the conjunctive adverb draws the sentences together by showing the relationship between them, a semicolon is appropriate for joining the two sentences into one. When two sentences are joined with a semicolon, they are no longer separate sentences. Therefore, what was the second sentence no longer begins with a capital letter. The relationship between the ideas in the following two sentences is expressed by the conjunctive adverb *therefore*, which appears at the beginning of the second sentence.

The rain will stop soon. Therefore, we can go to the beach.

If these sentences are joined with a semicolon, then the first letter of *therefore* is not capitalized.

no capital letter
↓
The rain will stop soon; therefore, we can go to the beach.
↗ ↖
semicolon comma

Here is the general pattern for this sentence.

Sub-sentence 1; conjunctive adverb, sub-sentence 2.
↗ ↖
semicolon comma

Note that this sentence pattern includes the term sub-sentence. A **sub-sentence** could stand alone as a sentence. But when it is made part of this sentence pattern, it becomes part of the overall sentence. It is no longer a separate sentence but rather a sub-sentence within the overall sentence.

Exercise

Rewrite the following sentences as one sentence by using the pattern shown above and the conjunctive adverb *however*.

It used to be hard to tell the twins apart.

Jim is now easy to recognize because he dyes his hair purple.

Here is the answer for the last exercise.

semicolon conjunctive adverb
 ↓ ↓ comma
It used to be hard to tell the twins apart; *however,* ↙
Jim is now easy to recognize because he dyes his hair purple.

The two original sentences are now sub-sentences within the overall sentence.

sub-sentence 1
It used to be hard to tell the twins apart; *however,*
Jim is now easy to recognize because he dyes his hair purple.
sub-sentence 2

Note that the conjunctive adverb is followed by a comma. The comma gives readers a moment to pause and conceptualize the relationship before proceeding to more details.

Homework Assignment

Write a sentence with the same pattern as the answers for the above exercises and with one of the conjunctive adverbs used in those exercises.

SECTION 14.3 THE USEFULNESS OF NEAR SYNONYMS

Here is the answer for the last exercise.

It was a typical summer day in Phoenix, and the temperature was close to 100 degrees; furthermore, the humidity was awfully high, and there was absolutely no breeze.

The coordinating conjunction *and* can be used to add information that supports and extends an idea. So *and* could be used instead of *furthermore* to join the sentences in the last exercise. The question may then be asked, Why should anyone bother with the big word *furthermore*? Why is it needed in the language? And more broadly, Do we need conjunctive adverbs?

One reason for using *furthermore* in the above sentence is that both of the sentences it joins contain *and*. Here is a version of the answer with *and* used in place of *furthermore*.

It was a typical summer day in Phoenix, and the temperature was close to 100 degrees, and the humidity was awfully high, and there was absolutely no breeze.

If you take a moment to read the last sentence completely, you will see (or hear) that the repetition of *and*—*and*, *and*, *and*—makes the sentence sound immature and boring. Occasionally a novelist uses such a pattern to convey how boring some situation is, but generally childish, boring sentences are to be avoided. The semicolon and the larger word *furthermore* provide a welcome change in sound and rhythm from the familiar combination of a comma and an *and*.

A second reason is that *furthermore* expresses the idea of “addition” a bit more strongly than *and*. *Furthermore* reinforces the impression that a number of factors combined to make the day terribly hot and uncomfortable. Thus, it is desirable to have several words with similar meanings in a language so that writers can avoid repeating the same word but can choose words which let sentences vary somewhat in feeling and melody.

Incidentally, what has just been said does not mean that words should never be repeated in a sentence. Sometimes repeating words is rhetorically effective. You should be aware that repeating words can improve or detract from a sentence and choose your words accordingly.

Here are some common conjunctive adverbs that you can occasionally use instead of coordinating or subordinating conjunctions:

accordingly, also, besides, consequently, furthermore, hence, however, indeed, likewise, meanwhile, moreover, nevertheless, nonetheless, otherwise, primarily, still, subsequently, then, therefore, thus

SECTION 14.4 CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS IN SEPARATE SENTENCES

The sentence pattern that we have been using so far in this chapter is useful for presenting information and for lending variety to a series of sentences. However, it is a somewhat special pattern in the sense that writers tend not to use it very often. Conjunctive adverbs are used more frequently in the second of a pair of **separate** sentences, with the conjunctive adverb indicating the relationship between the two sentences. For example, consider the first two sentences of the paragraph you are reading:

The sentence pattern that we have been using so far in this chapter is useful for presenting information and for lending variety to a series of sentences. *However*, it is a somewhat special pattern in the sense that writers tend not to use it very often.

The second sentence begins with the conjunctive adverb *however*. But note that the first sentence ends with a period, not a semicolon. Furthermore, the *h* in *however* is capitalized because it starts a new sentence. The remainder of this

chapter will deal with the use of conjunctive adverbs for indicating the relationship between the ideas in separate sentences.

Exercise

Rewrite this sentence as two sentences by changing the semicolon to a period and capitalizing the *n* in *nevertheless*.

My uncle, who is 28, obtained poor grades in high school and quit without graduating; nevertheless, he feels that, because he is now more mature, he could earn a GED and then obtain an associate degree in radiation technology from our local community college.

SECTION 14.5 STARTING A SENTENCE WITH A CONJUNCTIVE ADVERB

As illustrated by the answer to the last exercise, a conjunctive adverb can be placed at the beginning of a sentence. In that position, it expresses the relationship between its sentence and the previous sentence. In fact, it may even express the relationship between its sentence and the main idea of several previous sentences. The last sentence in one of the previous paragraphs begins like this:

Thus, it is desirable to have several words with similar meanings

The word *thus* is a conjunctive adverb whose meaning in this context is “for these reasons.” It expresses the relationship between its sentence and the ideas presented in not just the two earlier sentences of its own paragraph but also the ideas presented in the two previous paragraphs. In such a role, a conjunctive adverb is a powerful tool for bringing cohesion and coherence to a piece of writing.

Exercise

Rewrite this sentence with the semicolon replaced by a period and with the first letter of the conjunctive adverb capitalized. Retain the comma after the conjunctive adverb.

The latest edition of this dictionary is quite similar to the previous edition; however, the latest edition includes about 500 new words that have become a part of the language since the previous edition was published.

Here is the answer for the last exercise.

The latest edition of this dictionary is quite similar to the previous edition. However, the latest edition includes about 500 new words that have become a part of the language since the previous edition was published.

Note that there is a comma after the conjunctive adverb *however*, just as there is when the conjunctive adverb is preceded by a semicolon and does not begin a new sentence. Conjunctive adverbs are generally set off from the rest of a sentence with a comma.

Homework Assignment

Write two sentences. Begin the second sentence with a conjunctive adverb.

SECTION 14.6 AVOIDING COMMA-SPLICE ERRORS

When you use a conjunctive adverb to express the relationship between two sentences, the sentences must be separated by either a period or a semicolon. They cannot be separated by a comma.

Ron feels sick, therefore, he is not going to school today.

↑
comma splice error

Conjunctive adverbs differ from coordinating conjunctions with regard to punctuation. If you use the coordinating conjunction *so*, you can separate the original sentences with just a comma to form one sentence.

coordinating conjunction



Ron feels sick, so he is not going to school today.



correct

But a conjunctive adverb does not join two sentences into one sentence. You can use a period at the end of the first sentence, or you can join the sentences into one sentence with a semicolon. However, it is the semicolon that joins the sentences into one, not the conjunctive adverb.

period capital letter



Ron feels sick. Therefore, he is not going to school today.

Ron feels sick; therefore, he is not going to school today.



semicolon

The term **comma splice error** refers to the error of placing a comma between two complete sentences. It is an error because the writer is trying to “splice” two separate sentences together with just a comma.

The following exercise uses the conjunctive adverb *consequently*, which means “so” or “therefore.” However, the sentence contains a comma splice error that you will correct.

Exercise

Rewrite this sentence with the comma after *exams* changed to a period and the *c* in *consequently* capitalized.

Judy has been receiving poor grades on exams, consequently, her father has suggested that she turn off the TV when she does her homework.

SECTION 14.7 POSITIONS OF CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS

A conjunctive adverb need not be placed at the beginning of a sentence. Conjunctive adverbs are often placed within a sentence, and sometimes they are even placed at the end. These positions are shown in Sentences 2 and 3 below, which might follow Sentence 1:

1. I will not eat cabbage or spinach.
2. I will, *however*, eat Brussels sprouts.
3. I will eat Brussels sprouts, *however*.

As shown by Sentence 2, a conjunctive adverb often fits well between a helping verb and the main verb in a sentence.

I *will*, *however*, *eat* Brussels sprouts.



helping verb



main verb

Sentence 2 also shows that a conjunctive adverb placed within a sentence is generally set off by two commas.

The following exercise shows that if a sentence does not contain a helping verb, a conjunctive adverb may fit well right before the main verb; that is, between the subject and the verb.

Exercise

Rewrite just the second sentence with the conjunctive adverb *therefore* moved after *messenger*. Enclose *therefore* in commas.

The king liked the successful merchant's estate and wanted it for his summer home. Therefore, the king's messenger informed the merchant that the king would accept the estate as a present and, in exchange, would allow the merchant to continue living and working in the king's kingdom.

