

Sentence Development Tutorial

Tutorial 18: **Correlatives**

This Tutorial includes two files:

- **Lesson (18a_Correlatives_Lesson)**

In order to learn the material presented in this tutorial more effectively, as you read you should take notes in a place that you can reference later. If it is convenient, you could print the tutorial and annotate it so you can keep it for future reference.

- **Exercises (18b_Correlatives_Exercises** – located in the same area as the lesson)

- It has highlighted areas for you to answer the exercises using an application such as Adobe Acrobat Reader.
- Download and save this file as your own; you will share it with an instructor after you complete the lesson and exercises.

Please contact the Writing Center with any questions or difficulties:

csmtwc@smccd.edu or 650-574-6436.

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?

Please open your 18b exercises file and complete Exercise 1, 2 and 3.

Final Activity

Instructions:

1. Review a classroom essay that you are working on and be prepared to incorporate correlatives into your own writing.
2. Make an appointment for a conference with an instructor working in the Writing Center. To make this appointment, sign up using the same method you use to make essay conference appointments. Be sure to include a comment or note that you are meeting about a tutorial.
3. During this appointment, the instructor will make sure you understand the concepts covered in this tutorial, answer any questions that you might have, review your answers to the exercises, and check to see if you can incorporate the skill into your writing.