

CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS: WORDS IN ENDLESS GRAMMATICAL ANGST!

Also called adverbial conjunctions, **conjunctive adverbs** are pathetic, confused little creatures. They can't decide if they are adverbs or conjunctions in traditional grammar! Accordingly, they try to be both. This tendency leads to all sorts of punctuation problems.

Before we go into detail, however, we should take a look at the most common conjunctive adverbs and adverbial phrases so we can better recognize them. View this line-up not with contempt, but with pity for these half-breed misfits:

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|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| ➤ <i>accordingly</i> | ➤ <i>for example</i> | ➤ <i>in fact</i> | ➤ <i>of course</i> |
| ➤ <i>again</i> | ➤ <i>further</i> | ➤ <i>in particular</i> | ➤ <i>otherwise</i> |
| ➤ <i>also</i> | ➤ <i>furthermore</i> | ➤ <i>instead</i> | ➤ <i>still</i> |
| ➤ <i>as a result</i> | ➤ <i>hence</i> | ➤ <i>likewise</i> | ➤ <i>that is</i> |
| ➤ <i>besides</i> | ➤ <i>however</i> | ➤ <i>meanwhile</i> | ➤ <i>then</i> |
| ➤ <i>consequently</i> | ➤ <i>in addition</i> | ➤ <i>moreover</i> | ➤ <i>therefore</i> |
| ➤ <i>finally</i> | ➤ <i>indeed</i> | ➤ <i>namely</i> | ➤ <i>thus</i> |
| | | ➤ <i>nevertheless</i> | |

Because they are akin to adverbs, conjunctive adverbs can indeed function as simple adverbs. In such a situation, they merely modify a verb, adjective, or another adverb. When they behave this way, they do not need any special punctuation. They are simply functioning as adverbs. For example, consider these two sentences:

She was accordingly quite interested in grammar.
However ugly the gargoyle may be, I will go on a blind date with him.

Here, *accordingly* and *however* are simple adverbs. All *accordingly* does is modify the verb *interested*. All *however* does is modify the adjective *ugly*.

On the other hand, as Kolln and Funk note, conjunctive adverbs can also appear at the start of a sentence or clause to indicate result, concession, apposition, addition, time, contrast, summary, or reinforcement (273).

Result: *therefore, consequently, of course*
Concession: *nevertheless, yet, still, after all, of course*
Apposition: *for example, for instance, that is, namely, in other words*
Addition: *moreover, furthermore, also, in addition, likewise, further*
Time: *meanwhile, in the meantime*
Contrast: *however, instead, on the contrary, on the other hand, in contrast, rather*
Summary: *thus, in conclusion, then*
Reinforcement: *further, in particular, indeed, above all, in fact*

When conjunctive adverbs function this way, separate them from the rest of the sentence with a comma. In such cases, the conjunctive adverb needs a comma after it because it is a phrase appearing before an independent clause. Note the commas in the following sentences.

- ❖ *Therefore, I will eat eggs!*
- ❖ *In other words, grammar is a useful skill.*
- ❖ *Likewise, all students should embrace the sad little conjunctive adverbs.*
- ❖ *Meanwhile, the conjunctive adverbs sat pouting in the corner.*
- ❖ *However, we should not mock conjunctive adverbs.*
- ❖ *Thus, the conjunctive adverbs will bow before their masters, the cruel semicolons.*
- ❖ *Above all, we must realize conjunctive adverbs are an important part of the grammatical ecosystem.*

Finally, sometimes conjunctive adverbs try to pretend they are full conjunctions and hook two independent clauses together. This pretension is indeed a sad travesty! They are not really full conjunctions, and they can't do that job by themselves. Typically, they lurk just behind a semicolon in this situation, and it is the semicolon that does the real job of joining the two independent clauses. A comma should always follow the conjunctive adverb in such instances.

- ❖ The gods thundered in the heavens; *furthermore*, the mortals below cowered in fear.
- ❖ The bank robber dodged the bullet; *however*, Joey was shot seventeen times in the tibia.
- ❖ Susan appreciated the flowers; *nevertheless*, a Corvette would be a finer gift.
- ❖ Dr. Wheeler is a grammar tyrant; *thus*, he requires correct punctuation.
- ❖ She will go on a blind date with George; *however*, he is a really ugly fellow.
- ❖ The tyrannosaurs were migrating south; *meanwhile*, the apatosaurs breathed a sigh of relief.
- ❖ The conjunctive adverbs pretend they are conjunctions; *however*, the semicolon is what really connects the two clauses together.

Note that if students use a comma instead of a semicolon in the examples above, they have created a comma splice. Such formations absolutely require the semicolon in front of the conjunctive adverb and a comma after the conjunctive adverb.

Work Cited:

Kolln, Martha and Robert Funk. *Understanding English Grammar*, 10th edition, Pearson Publishing, 2011.