

coordination; questions

Coordination happens when two parallel units of language are connected, snapped together, to make one larger unit that then takes on one of the usual sentence functions.

Conjunctions do most of the coordination in English, especially the basic coordinating conjunctions *and*, *but*, and *or*.

Coordination occurs on many different levels:

- kibbles **and** bits (individual nouns)
- savory **and** creamy (individual adjectives)
- chew **and** swallow (individual verbs)
- one **or** two (numerals)
- any **or** all (determiners)
- Fancy Feast **and** Cat Chow (noun phrases)
- had eaten **and** had digested (verb phrases)
- over the river **and** through the woods (prepositional phrases)
- Tweedy went to the vet, **but** the vet was busy (complete sentences)

When words or phrases snap together in coordination, they become like one larger element of the same type. In the case of nouns or noun phrases, two or more single elements then function as a plural element.

- Fancy Feast is delicious.
- Cat Chow is highly nutritious.
- Fancy Feast and Cat Chow are staples of a balanced diet.

In a list of more than two items coordinated with *and* or *or*, all but the final conjunction can be omitted:

- Tweedy loves fresh sliced turkey, Cheez-Its, **and** anchovy paste.

Many English sentences include multiple coordinations on various levels.

- Tweedy and Whisper play in the back yard, and Fluffy and Sam run through the easement and along the creek, but Snickers and Tabby eat and sleep on the neighbor's patio or driveway.

As long as you supply coordinating conjunctions, the resulting strings of phrases will be grammatical sentences. People often do this in speaking. In terms of style, very long sequences of "and-spliced" clauses are frowned upon by prescriptive grammarians, not unreasonably.

In writing, two sentences can be coordinated into one by using a semicolon instead of a conjunction. When you hear such a sentence read aloud, you hear it as two sentences; the pause at the semicolon may be just shorter than the pause after a period.

Questions are part of the essential give-and-take of any language. We have already seen how operator verbs (*do* and modals) are used to form questions in the "I" aspect of NICE.

- Tweedy **sleeps** in a cat bed.
- **Does** Tweedy **sleep** in a cat bed?
- **Should** Tweedy **sleep** in a cat bed?

When the main verb is *be*, or sometimes *have*, no operator is needed; you can just invert the main verb and subject.

- Tweedy **is** grey.
- **Is** Tweedy grey?
- Tweedy **has** fleas.
- **Has** Tweedy fleas?

Inversion with *have*, though, sounds old-fashioned or dialectal, and is becoming less and less standard. Inversion with other verbs used to be possible, but now sounds too old-fashioned.

- Tweedy **goes** to Monica's house.
- ***Goes** Tweedy to Monica's house?

Inverted and NICE questions tend to be "yes/no." Another kind of question in English is the **wh-question**, sometimes informally called the "nosy question." Yes or no aren't sufficient answers; the nosy questioner wants the answerer to supply details. Wh-questions are introduced by specialized question words that, unsurprisingly, begin with wh-, except for "how," which is close enough.

- How does Tweedy get water?
- What does Tweedy enjoy?
- Who feeds Tweedy?
- When does Tweedy eat breakfast?
- Where does Tweedy sleep?

Note how the operator is used in all those examples except the "who" question. When the question word takes the place of the subject of the expected answer, no operator is needed.

- When does Tweedy eat breakfast?
- Tweedy eats breakfast at five-thirty AM.

but

- Who feeds Tweedy?
- Tim feeds Tweedy.

Alternative questions are coordinations that include possible answers to choose from. They involve the conjunction *or*, sometimes operators, and sometimes code.

- Does Tweedy sleep on the bed, in the chair, or on the futon, or does he stay awake all night?