

## **12.3: THE SEMICOLON: CONNECTING INDEPENDENT CLAUSES: THE CONJUNCTIVE ADVERB**

See Chapter 24 for a discussion of parentheticals.



### DEFINITION

**Conjunctive Adverb:** A *conjunctive adverb* connects two independent clauses and shows a relationship between them.

He lived alone at the time; however, she moved in a few weeks later.  
She was not a good listener; therefore, I didn't confide in her.  
They said it over and over; still I couldn't really accept it.

Though there may be others, these are the common conjunctive adverbs:

<i>according</i>	<i>in fact</i>	<i>hence</i>
<i>also</i>	<i>indeed</i>	<i>plus</i>
<i>besides</i>	<i>likewise</i>	<i>so (meaning therefore)</i>
<i>consequently</i>	<i>moreover</i>	<i>still</i>
<i>furthermore</i>	<i>nevertheless</i>	<i>then</i>
<i>however</i>	<i>otherwise</i>	<i>thus</i>
<i>in addition</i>	<i>therefore</i>	<i>yet</i>



### DISCUSSION

These words that we are calling “conjunctive adverbs” are, by nature, adverbs but become conjunctions when they are moved out to the front of an independent clause. In order to be considered a conjunctive adverb, the word must be the first word of an independent clause. If it is somewhere in the middle of the sentence, it is not a conjunction. It is simply an adverb or maybe a parenthetical.

She was <u>therefore</u> unable to complete the test.	adverb
<u>Therefore</u> , she was unable to complete the test.	conjunction
I was <u>so</u> tired of hearing him complain.	adverb
So I was tired of hearing him complain.	conjunction
I will help him pay, <u>however</u> , when the time comes.	adverb
<u>However</u> , I will help him pay when the time comes.	conjunction

Another way to identify a conjunctive adverb is to recognize that it is a word that begins a sentence but can never begin a conversation. You cannot walk up to someone and say, “Therefore, we want it back.” *Therefore*, as a conjunctive adverb, has to link back to a prior thought.

It is important to know which words can serve as conjunctive adverbs and to distinguish them from other kinds of conjunctions, particularly subordinate conjunctions.



### RULE

**SEMICOLON. 4:** Use a semicolon or a period in front of a conjunctive adverb.

He had been fired before for the same behavior; therefore, it wasn't a shock.  
I had already lent money to them; moreover, my parents had also.  
She was still in the hospital; so I couldn't really be of any assistance.



## DISCUSSION

The difference between using a semicolon and a period has to do with the complication of the sentences, the length of the sentences, and the other punctuation present. When the sentences are long and/or complicated and/or there are a number of other marks of punctuation, the period is probably a clearer mark of punctuation than the semicolon.

He needed money; however, I wasn't one he could ask.  
I arrived on Friday, May 2, at 6:00, 6:30. However, Sam, my brother, couldn't wait; and I had to take a taxi from there.

The bank asked to see a driver's license; instead, he gave them his military ID.  
She wanted her husband, Ron, to do it. Instead, Jerry, Tomas, and Edward -- her brothers -- came over to complete the project.

It is probably not a good idea to continue to use semicolons to join several sentences that each begin with a conjunctive adverb. Make a decision to use a period in places rather than all semicolons.

There really is no absolute rule about how many semicolons/how many periods. Again, this is a judgment call.

I was not sure of his address; therefore, I called his sister before I left the house. However, she was not home, and I talked to his nine-year-old brother; so I wasn't able to get a lot of information. Consequently, I was quite late in arriving.



## RULE

***SEMICOLON.5:*** Use a comma after a conjunctive adverb that has two or more syllables.

The papers were mailed; however, they were not received.  
She needed the report; therefore, she called me.  
He moved in the middle of the night; moreover, he left no forwarding address.



## RULE

***SEMICOLON.6:*** Use no punctuation after a conjunctive adverb that has only one syllable.

I went in on Friday; yet I didn't finish the project.  
There were five of them; still we needed more.  
She was legally an adult; thus there was little her parents could do.



## DISCUSSION

It is important to note again that, when the word that can be a conjunctive adverb is in the middle of a sentence and not out in front of a sentence, it isn't connecting anything; so it isn't a conjunction. It is now just an adverb or perhaps a parenthetical, and the punctuation we are discussing here does not apply.

The company; ☹ however, did not reply.  
The company, ☺ however, did not reply.

We had not; ☹ yet heard from our preferred candidate.  
We had not ☺ yet heard from our preferred candidate.

He was; ☹ therefore, ☹ not entitled to the raise.  
He was ☺ therefore ☺ not entitled to the raise.  
He was, ☺ therefore, ☺ not entitled to the raise.

## RULE

**SEMICOLON.7:** When there is a coordinate conjunction preceding the word that can be a conjunctive adverb, use the punctuation appropriate for the coordinate conjunction, not the conjunctive adverb punctuation.

He was driving northbound, and therefore he had to turn on Oak.  
She had the appropriate degree, but yet she could not handle the job.  
The bank had foreclosed; but, however, we still hoped to save the house.



## DISCUSSION

Notice that, in order to be considered a conjunctive adverb, the word has to be the connecting word. If there is a coordinate conjunction -- *and, but, or, nor* -- then the word we might have considered to be a conjunctive adverb is once again just an adverb or perhaps a parenthetical, and the punctuation involving semicolons or periods before and a comma after again does not apply.

## RULE

**SEMICOLON.8:** If the word that can be a conjunctive adverb is in the position out in the front but does not have an independent subject and verb after it, use a comma in front of it, not a period or semicolon.

He sustained major injuries, yet was hospitalized for only a few days.  
The trucks were waiting to be filled, therefore were not able to make deliveries.  
She couldn't reach the doctor, so went directly to the hospital.



## DISCUSSION

Again, to be considered “conjunctive,” this word must link two independent clauses. If the word that can be a conjunctive adverb is not linking two independent clauses, it is not considered to be a conjunction. It is once again just an adverb or parenthetical.

In this case, the word is an adverb, and there is no conjunction, and we use the comma to take the place of the omitted coordinate conjunction.

See Chapter 14 for a full discussion of the comma of omission.