Subordination and Coordination

Subordination: linking of dependent and independent clauses by either a subordinating conjunction or a relative pronoun

- A dependent clause CANNOT stand alone!
- Common subordinating conjunctions include after, although, because, before, even though, if, so that, unless, when.

  Example: **Before Luke Skywalker could take on the Empire, he had to train with Yoda.**

  - The underlined words in the above constitute a “subordinate clause”: They contain a subject (*Luke Skywalker*) and a predicate (*could take on the Empire*), but they cannot stand alone—they are not an “independent” clause—because they begin with the subordinating conjunction *Before*.

  - When a subordinate clause comes at the beginning of a sentence, as it does in the above example, follow it with a comma; when it comes at the end of a sentence, do not set it off with a comma:

    - Wrong: *Luke Skywalker had to train with Yoda, before he could take on the Empire.*
    - Right: *Luke Skywalker had to train with Yoda before he could take on the Empire.*

- Relative pronouns include who, whom, which, that, whose.

  Example: *Harry Potter has a scar that looks like a lightning bolt.*
  Example: *This evening we ordered Chinese food, which was quite tasty.*

  - In the first example above, *that looks like a lightning bolt* is an “essential” subordinate clause: It is a necessary part of the sentence.
  - In the second example, *which was quite tasty* is a “non-essential” subordinate clause: It’s almost parenthetical, an “Oh, by the way, reader.”
  - In deciding whether to begin a subordinate clause with “that” or “which,” determine whether the information in the clause is necessary. If it is, use “that”; if it isn’t, use “which” and set off the clause with a comma (as shown above).

Coordination: linking of two phrases or clauses of equal rank

- Use a coordinating conjunction: for, and, not, but, or, yet, so*
- Examples:
  - His classes meet in SOBA and in Hyde.
  - Contrary to popular belief, Frankenstein’s monster was well-spoken and sympathetic.
She wanted to watch a movie with her roommate, **but** her professor assigned a paper due the next day.

- When a coordinating conjunction connects two independent clauses, as it does in the third example above, a comma precedes the conjunction.
- When it connects constructions that are not independent clauses, no comma should precede the conjunction:
  
  - **Wrong:** She wanted to watch a movie, **but** needed to write a paper.
  - **Right:** She wanted to watch a movie **but** needed to write a paper.

*A good way to remember the list of coordinating conjunctions is to think about the word “FANBOYS”:*  
- For  
- And  
- Not  
- But  
- Or  
- Yet  
- So