

Conjunctions: some common mistakes

In this lesson we will take a look at some common mistakes in the use of conjunctions.

Incorrect: As soon as he got the telegram, at once he started.

Correct: As soon as he got the telegram, he started.

Correct: He got the telegram and started at once.

Explanation

We need just one conjunction to join two clauses.

Incorrect: Neither Sam is intelligent nor ambitious.

Correct: Sam is neither intelligent nor ambitious.

Incorrect: Neither he is a thief nor a rogue.

Correct: He is neither a thief nor a rogue.

When we use a correlative conjunction, the same kind of word should go after the two parts of the conjunction. So, for example, if you use a noun after neither, you have to use a noun after nor. If you use an adjective after neither, you have to use an adjective after nor.

In the sentence, Neither Sam is intelligent nor ambitious, the word neither is followed by a noun (Sam) and the word nor is followed by an adjective (ambitious). This makes the construction wrong.

Incorrect: Hardly the sun had risen when we set out.

Correct: The sun had hardly risen when we set out.

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Correct: Hardly had the sun risen when we set out.

Explanation

When a negative word goes at the beginning of a sentence, we use an inverted word order. That means the auxiliary verb goes before the subject.

Incorrect: Hardly had he left than his friend came.

Correct: Hardly had he left when his friend came.

Explanation

Than is a word used in comparative structures. It should be used in the construction no sooner ...than.

Hardly is used in the structure hardly when / before.