Correlative Conjunctions
What is a correlative conjunction?
As suggested by their name, correlative **conjunctions** correlate, working in pairs to join phrases or words that carry equal importance within a sentence. Like many of the most interesting parts of speech, correlative conjunctions are fun to use. At the same time, there are some important rules to remember for using them correctly.

- When using correlative conjunctions, ensure **verbs** agree so your sentences make sense. For example: *Every night, either loud music or fighting neighbors wake John from his sleep.*
- When you use a correlative conjunction, you must be sure that **pronouns** agree. For example: *Neither Debra nor Sally expressed her annoyance when the cat broke the antique lamp.*
- When using correlative conjunctions, be sure to keep parallel structure intact. Equal grammatical units need to be incorporated into the entire sentence. For example: *Not only did Mary grill burgers for Michael, but she also fixed a steak for her dog, Vinny.*

Examples of Correlative Conjunctions
In the following examples, the correlative conjunctions have been italicized for easy identification.

1. She is **both** intelligent **and** beautiful.
2. I will **either** go for a hike **or** stay home and watch TV.
3. Jerry is **neither** rich **nor** famous.
4. He is **not only** intelligent, **but also** very funny.
5. Would you **rather** go shopping **or** spend the day at the beach?

Correlative Conjunctions Exercises
The following exercises will help you gain greater understanding about how correlative conjunctions work. Choose the best answer to complete each sentence.

1. She is neither polite _______ funny.
   - A. Or
   - B. Nor
   - C. Not
   - D. Yet
   Answer: B. She is neither polite **nor** funny.

2. _______ that is the case, _______ I’m not surprised about what’s happening.
   - A. If / then
   - B. No sooner / than
   - C. Scarcely / when
   - D. Whether / or
   Answer: A. *If* that is the case, *then* I’m not surprised about what’s happening.
3. Have you made a decision about ______ to go to the movies ______ not?
   A. If / then
   B. Either / or
   C. Whether / or
   D. What with / and
   Answer: C. Have you made a decision about whether to go to the movies or not?

4. ______ had I put my umbrella away, ______ it started raining.
   A. No sooner / than
   B. If / then
   C. What with / and
   D. Neither / nor
   Answer: A. No sooner had I put my umbrella away, than it started raining.

5. This salad is ______ delicious ______ healthy.
   A. Whether / or
   B. Both / and
   C. Scarcely / when
   D. Rather / than
   Answer: B. This salad is both delicious and healthy.

Correlative Conjunctions List

There are many pairs of correlative conjunctions. This list contains many of the most commonly used pairs.

As / as
Both / and
Either / or
Hardly / when
If / then
Just as / so
Neither / nor
Not only / but also
No sooner / than
Not / but
Rather / than
Scarcely / when
What with / and
Whether / or

Correlative Conjunctions Exercises

1. I like ______ to sing opera, ______________ to spend my spare time practicing ballroom dances.
   A. not only / but also
   B. whether / or
C. neither / nor
D. not / but

2. The test was ____________ very short __________ quite easy.
A. not / but
B. both / and
C. whether / or
D. scarcely / when

3. ____________ Joe _______ his sisters could understand what their parents were saying when they spoke French.
A. Whether / or
B. No sooner / than
C. Rather / than
D. Neither / nor

Answer Key:
1 – A. I like not only to sing opera, but also to spend my spare time practicing ballroom dances.
2 – B. The test was both very short and quite easy.
3 – D. Neither Joe nor his sisters could understand what their parents were saying when they spoke French.