Paired Conjunctions

Paired conjunctions are often used in both spoken and written English to make a point, give an explanation, or discuss alternatives.

Paired conjunctions are sometimes known as correlative conjunctions, and they always join grammatically equal elements (e.g., noun & noun, adjective & adjective, phrase & phrase, clause & clause, etc.). They also lend equal weight to the joined elements; which is to say, one joined element is always equal to but never subordinate to the other.

The verb agrees with the closest noun.

Below are four paired conjunctions commonly used in English:

- either ..... or
- neither ..... nor
- not only ..... but (also)
- both ..... and

Either ♡ ♡ ♡ or

- It is related to preference.

Examples:
- Put your earnings either in a bank or in a treasury account. (one or the other)
- Either you or Susan has to remain with me. (one or the other)
- They objected to either following the book or keeping the central theme. (one or the other)

Neither ♡ ♡ ♡ nor

- It is for negative addition: Not X AND not Y.

Examples:
- Neither the movie nor the play was good. (singular verb form)
- Neither smoking nor drinking is permitted in his house. (singular verb form)
- Neither I nor my son carries a mobile phone. (a singular noun)

Not only ♡ ♡ ♡ but (also)

- They join like (same word form) elements in a sentence. The verb agrees with closest noun. When Not only ... but also begins a sentence and joins two verbs, the auxiliary verb precedes the subject.

Examples:
- I liked not only the movie but also the play.
- The directors wanted not only to win but also to receive recognition for their work.
- Not only does Ebert like but also recommends the movie.

Both ♡ ♡ ♡ and

- They join like (same word form) elements in a sentence.

Examples:
- We both applauded and stood up.
- Both became angry both with our singing and our shouting.
- Both the teacher and the principal were furious. (plural verb form)
Exercise 1: Write the conjunction that best completes the sentence.

1. __________ you but also Paul forgot to do the annual report last week.
2. You will need to finish it by __________ today or tomorrow. Just get it done by Friday.
3. __________ you and Paul have been wasting too much time.
4. I will take __________ yours nor Paul’s excuses anymore.
5. __________ does she yell at me, but also she screams at me.
6. __________ she stops yelling at me or I quit.
7. __________ do I want to quit, nor do I have the savings to be able to quit.
8. She __________ annoys and angers me.
9. My boss not only overlooks my achievements, __________ avoids giving me compliments.
10. Neither do I want trouble, __________ I ask for it.

Exercise 2: Match the sentence halves to make a complete sentence.

**A**
1. Beth Peter __________
2. Not only do we want to go __________
3. Either Jack will have to work more hours __________
4. That story was __________
5. Students who do well not only study hard __________
6. In the end he had to choose __________
7. Sometimes it is __________
8. I would love to take __________

**B**
a. but we have enough money.
b. neither true nor realistic.
c. not only wise to listen to your parents but also interesting.
d. and I are coming next week.
e. either his career or his hobby.
f. both my laptop and my cell phone on holiday.
g. but also use their instincts if they do not know the answer.
h. or we will have to hire somebody new.

Exercise 3: Choose the correct option to complete the sentences.

1. ____ my brother ____ I am good students.
   a. both / and b. neither / nor c. both / nor
2. Each year, ____ my brother ____ I win an achievement award.
   a. either / and b. neither / or c. either / or
3. Last year, my brother ____ won "best in academics", ____ he won "best in sports" awards.
   a. both / and also b. not only / but also c. not only / and also
4. ____ he ____ I want to lose at anything. We're very competitive.
   a. neither / and b. neither / nor c. either / or
5. Not only ____ us to work hard, but also ____ when we succeed.
   a. do our parents encourage / they reward
   b. our parents encourage / they do reward
   c. our parents do encourage / they reward
6. Neither my brother nor I ____ to disappoint them.
   a. want b. wants c. do want