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# However: 7 Sentence Positions & 2 Uses

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By Tanya Trusler

(<https://blog.esllibrary.com/author/tanya-trusler/>)

on August

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GRAMMAR & USAGE

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## HOWEVER YOU LOOK AT IT, "HOWEVER" IS TRICKY TO TEACH AND LEARN!

In our new [Militarized Police \(http://www.esllibrary.com/lessons.php?section\\_id=112\)](http://www.esllibrary.com/lessons.php?section_id=112) lesson, we included a grammar review of the term *however* because it is used in various ways in the reading. Our head writer asked me to expand on it in this week's blog post, and I thought that was a great idea since many of my former students struggled with this word when writing formal essays (especially in my TOEFL class). Any intermediate to advanced student would benefit from a review of the usage, sentence

position, and punctuation of *however*!

## USE 1: CONTRAST

### A. AS A CONNECTOR

The most common use of *however* is as an **adverb** that connects two sentences/clauses in order to show a contrasting idea. In this use, *however* is also known as a *transition word* or a *conjunctive adverb*. It is common in formal speaking and writing. Think of it as a formal way to say *but*, but don't make the mistake of using it with the same punctuation! (Conjunctions like *but* and *and* take an optional comma before and no comma after.)

#### SENTENCE POSITION 1:

*However* comes at the beginning of the second sentence (the one that describes the contrast or opposite viewpoint), following the period from the first sentence. In this position, *however* is followed by a comma.

- We were told we would be discussing the new schedule during the meeting. **However**, our boss never brought it up once.
- The temperature on Mercury's surface exceeds 430 degrees Celsius during the day. **However**, it falls to minus 180 degrees at night.
- Our school only has Apple computers. **However**, some students are more familiar

with PCs.

#### **SENTENCE POSITION 2:**

Similar to position 1, *however* can also join two sentences/clauses together. Place a semicolon after the first clause, followed by *however* and a comma.

- We were told we would be discussing the new schedule during the meeting; **however**, our boss never brought it up once.
- The temperature on Mercury's surface exceeds 430 degrees Celsius during the day; **however**, it falls to minus 180 degrees at night.
- Our school only has Apple computers; **however**, some students are more familiar with PCs.

What's the difference between the examples in sentence position 1 and 2? Nothing! Use both ways for variety within your essay. Using a period is often recommended when both sentences are quite long. Using a semicolon is recommended for shorter sentences or to keep the train of thought "flowing" smoothly (using a semicolon connects and relates two sentences a bit more than a period does).

#### **B. AS AN ASIDE**

*However* is also an adverb in this case, and it is used to show contrast or opposing ideas. The difference is in the **placement** of the word, which also affects its **strength**. In these next two positions, *however* is not directly following one idea and preceding the next, so as you can guess, it's not as strong of a contrast. *However* in these positions is also known as a *nonessential adverb* or a *parenthetical adverb*. It is not essential or as important to the meaning of the sentence. The idea is that you could remove *however* without it affecting the meaning of the rest of the sentence that much.

#### **SENTENCE POSITION 3:**

Insert *however* after the subject of the second sentence. It can also fall between a two-part verb (between the auxiliary or modal and main verb). In these positions, commas must come before and after *however*.

- I can't make it to the party. My husband, **however**, will be attending.
- The union came up with a plan. The government, **however**, wants to renegotiate.
- Camping in the summer is fun. You must, **however**, remember to use sunscreen.

#### **SENTENCE POSITION 4:**

Place *however* at the end of the second sentence. A comma must precede *however* in

this position.

- I can't make it to the party. My husband will be attending, **however**.
- The union came up with a plan. The government wants to renegotiate, **however**.
- Camping in the summer is fun. You must remember to use sunscreen, **however**.

What's the difference between the four sentence positions so far? Can we use all four with no difference in meaning? The answer to that is *yes*, although using positions 3 and 4 suggests that the connection between the two sentences is slightly less important.

- I have two dogs. **However**, my roommate prefers cats.
- I have two dogs; **however**, my roommate prefers cats.
- I have two dogs. My roommate, **however**, prefers cats.
- I have two dogs. My roommate prefers cats, **however**.

## USE 2: IN WHATEVER MANNER

*However* is also a **conjunction** or **adverb** (depending on the sentence position) that means *in whatever manner or means or no matter how*.

### SENTENCE POSITION 5:

**Conjunction:** Place *however* between two clauses with no punctuation on either side.

- I will assist **however** I can.
- Decorate it **however** you like.

#### SENTENCE POSITIONS 6 & 7:

**Adverb:** Place *however* at the beginning of the dependent clause. In English, dependent clauses can follow independent clauses (use no punctuation before or after *however*) or begin the sentence (use no punctuation after *however*). If the dependent clause begins the sentence, don't forget to include a comma at the end of the dependent clause.

- The situation is unfair **however** you look at it.
- **However** you look at it, the situation is unfair.

Even though this seems like a lot to take in, remember that most formal transition words in English (such as *moreover*, *on the other hand*, *furthermore*, *in contrast*, etc.) all follow the same first four sentence patterns. Find a comprehensive list of transition words on page 5 of our [How to Write Body Paragraphs](http://www.esl-library.com/lessons.php?section_id=322) ([http://www.esl-library.com/lessons.php?section\\_id=322](http://www.esl-library.com/lessons.php?section_id=322)) lesson.

## 10 comments

**Leave a Comment ↓****Fuclam (<https://fuclam.com>) says:**

Jun 20, 2019 at 11:44 pm

Thanks Tanya!

Your post is very comprehensible and rational which help me much in my study.

**Tanya Trusler (<http://editingtoat.com>) says:**

Jun 21, 2019 at 11:44 am

I'm very happy to hear that! Thanks for your comment.

**Narges Javadpour says:**

Feb 15, 2019 at 2:11 am

Dear Tanya,

I was teaching the position of "however" as a conjunctive adverb in a sentence yesterday, when I suddenly wondered whether I was using it in the right position in this sentence:

The lesson was confusing and the students did not listen very carefully; the exam, however, was not as difficult as they assumed it to be.

What I need to know is could we separate the verb "to be" from the negating element and put it before "however" along with the subject? As:

The lesson was confusing and the students did not listen very carefully; the exam was, however, not as difficult as they assumed it to be.

Or since it is the main verb, we are not allowed to, and it is only when “to be” is an auxiliary, as in present or past progressive, just like modal auxiliaries as in:

The research relies heavily on literary embellishments of the text in question; the stylistic features cannot, however, be studied in a completely literary critical approach.



**Tanya Trusler (<http://editingtoat.com>) says:**

Feb 15, 2019 at 1:59 pm

Hi Narges, great question! In mid-sentence position, “however” can almost always be placed next to what you’d like to emphasize. Your first example (“The exam, however, was not as difficult...”) is correct and places emphasis on the exam.

Another natural example would be “The exam was not, however, as difficult...”, and this places the emphasis on the lack of difficulty. To answer your question about your second example (“The exam was, however, not as difficult...”), it is possible but it’s not really doing as much for the sentence, and it doesn’t sound like the most natural choice. Keeping “was not” together is more natural. You’re right when you guessed that it’s also natural for “however” to come after the Be verb when it’s acting as an auxiliary (“...cannot, however, be...”) or before an adjective (“The exam was, however, extremely



difficult”).



**Prashanna says:**

Jun 28, 2017 at 7:56 am

Hello Tanya!

I am preparing the TOEFL Integrated writing section. Is the following sentence grammatically correct? “The lecturer, however, rebuts the author’s argument?” I’ve heard that one should better not use the parenthetical adverb. Is it okay to go with the above sentence?

Thanking you!



**Tanya Trusler (<http://editingtoat.com>) says:**

Jun 28, 2017 at 3:18 pm

Hi Prashanna,

That sentence is correct (i.e., “The lecturer, however, rebuts the author’s argument.”). An adverb in that position is quite formal, so it’s often seen in academic writing. I would absolutely recommend using adverbs in this position on the TOEFL test. Best of luck to you!



**Dawood Phillip (@Dawood627) says:**

Aug 29, 2014 at 11:33 pm

Tanya, I always appreciate how you make general rules at the end. Like in the response to the question. Absorbing every word is a

challenge but concepts, I can manage.



**Tanya says:**

Sep 02, 2014 at 6:23 am

Thank you, Dawood Phillip! That's so nice to hear. :)



**Tara Benwell (<http://www.esl-library.com>) says:**

Aug 29, 2014 at 2:59 pm

I think it helps teachers and learners to know that we do a lot of research when we're working on our lessons. Native English speakers and even teachers, writers, and editors may know something is right or wrong, but we still have to look up rules when it comes to explaining the intricacies of language. We learned so much this week. Thank you!

We learned a lot about "however" as one word, but what about "how ever"? We often use it at the beginning of a question, such as "How ever did this happen?". Can you help us sort this use out, Tanya?



**Tanya says:**

Aug 29, 2014 at 5:33 pm

That's so true! I always double-check all the grammar rules before writing a post, and I usually end up learning something new! In this case, it was when to use "how

ever" as two words. Here is what Oxford Dictionary Online (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com> (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>)) had to say about the usage of however vs. how ever:

"When "ever" is used for emphasis after how or why, it should be written as a separate word. Thus it is correct to write "how ever did you manage?" rather than "however did you manage?" (as distinct from other uses of the adverb "however," which is always written as one word). With other words such as what, where, and who, the situation is not clear-cut: both two-word and one-word forms (both "what ever" and "whatever," and so on) are well represented, and neither is regarded as particularly more correct than the other."

I'd advise you to tell your students to stick to the one-word spelling, unless it's specifically used for emphasis at the beginning of a sentence (when you could remove the word "ever" and the meaning wouldn't change).

For example: How ever did you do it? (= How did you do it?)

**SORRY, COMMENTS FOR THIS ENTRY ARE CLOSED.**

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