# Parallel Structure

Summary:

Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. This can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. The usual way to join parallel structures is with the use of coordinating conjunctions such as "and" or "or."

Words and Phrases

With the -ing form (gerund) of words:

Parallel:

Diana prefers non-competitive activities like hiking, swimming, and sailing.

With infinitive phrases:

Parallel:

Diana prefers to hike, to swim, and to sail because they don’t require competition.

OR

Diana likes to hike, swim, and sail because they don’t require competition.

(Note: You can use "to" before all the verbs in a sentence or only before the first one.)

Do not mix forms.

**Example 1**

Not Parallel:

Sarah likes reading, sleeping, and **to play** video games.

Parallel:

Sarah likes reading, sleeping, and **playing** video games.

**Example 2**

Not Parallel:

The sales manager was asked to write his report quickly, accurately, and in a detailed manner.

Parallel:

The sales manager was asked to write his report quickly, accurately, and thoroughly.

**Example 3**

Not Parallel:

The teacher said that his grade was improving because he had learned to start his essays early, finish his reading on time, and his proofreading was improving too.

Parallel:

The teacher said that his grade was improving because he had learned to start his essays early, finish his reading on time, and improve his proofreading habits.

**Clauses**

A parallel structure that begins with clauses must keep on with clauses. Changing to another pattern or changing the voice of the verb (from active to passive or vice versa) will break the parallelism.

**Example 1**

Not Parallel:

The coach told the players that they should get a lot of sleep, that they should not eat too much, and to do some warm-up exercises before the game.

Parallel:

The coach told the players that they should get a lot of sleep, that they should not eat too much, and that they should do some warm-up exercises before the game.

— or —

Parallel:

The coach told the players that they should get a lot of sleep, not eat too much, and do some warm-up exercises before the game.

Proofreading Strategies to Try:

* Skim your paper, pausing at the words "and" and "or." Check on each side of these words to see whether the items joined are parallel. If not, make them parallel.
* If you have several items in a list, put them in a column to see if they are parallel.
* Listen to the sound of the items in a list or the items being compared. Do you hear the same kinds of sounds? For example, is there a series of "-ing" words beginning each item? Or do your hear a rhythm being repeated? If something is breaking that rhythm or repetition of sound, check to see if it needs to be made parallel.

**Examples**

1. The competition for the presidency should bring out the best in the candidates as they showcase their qualifications, experience, and prove they have a vision for the country.
2. I watched the election results with shock, horror and I felt nauseous.
3. Donald Trump wants to bomb Iraq, build a wall at the border and Muslims would have to wear identification, like Jews did in Germany.
4. Hillary Clinton was plagued by accusations about her email and her husband’s affair.

\*\*Write your own: List two or three things you saw or felt about the election and turn it into one sentence.