



# Parallelism

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**PARALLELISM**, or parallel structure, is an effective way to add smoothness and power to your writing.

Parallelism is a balance of two or more **similar words, phrases, or clauses**.

**THE KEY WORD WHEN PARALLELING WITHIN SENTENCES, CLAUSES, OR ENTIRE PARAGRAPHS IS BALANCE.**

## PARALLEL STRUCTURE WITHIN SENTENCES

Compare the two versions of each of these sentences.

1. She likes dancing, swimming, and to jog.
2. She likes **dancing**, **swimming**, and **jogging**.
3. The cat ran across the yard; the street is where it ran next.
4. The cat ran **across** the yard and **down** the street.
5. He only dates women without convictions and who agree with everything he says.
6. He only dates women **who have** no convictions and **who agree** with everything he says.

## CREATING BALANCE WITH COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Coordinating conjunctions (**and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet**) are used to connect a pair or a series of items. When those items are closely parallel in content, they should be expressed in parallel or the same grammatical form.

Compare the two versions of each of these sentences.

1. He either loves you or he does not like you very much.
2. He either **loves you** or **hates you**.
3. The car is fast, and has a sleek design.
4. The car is both **fast** and **sleek**.
5. The child is well mannered and sometimes shows great insight.
6. The child is **well mannered** and sometimes **insightful**.

## CREATING BALANCE WITH CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS

Correlative conjunctions come in pairs: either...or / neither...nor / not only...but also / both...and / whether...or.

Compare the two versions of each sentence.

1. The shutters were not only too long but also were too wide.
2. The shutters were not only **too long** but also **too wide**.
3. Either he goes or I will leave instead of him.
4. Either **he goes** or I **go**.
5. Jill plays golf well, and she also coaches exceptionally.
6. Jill not only **plays well**, but also **coaches exceptionally**.

## BALANCED COMPARISONS LINKED WITH THAN OR AS

In comparisons linked with **than** or **as**, the elements being compared should appear in parallel grammatical structure.

Compare the two versions of each sentence.

1. It is easier to criticize than complementing someone.
2. It is easier to **criticize** than to **complement** someone.
3. Sam could not convince me that lying is as wrong as to steal.
4. Sam could not convince me that **lying** is as wrong as **stealing**.
5. Susie could run as fast as Tom's speed.
6. Susie could run **as fast as** Tom.

## PARALLEL PHRASES AND CLAUSES

Sometimes you may need to balance ideas within phrases or independent and dependent clauses.

I hear the roar of the crowd; I remember the image of the players; and I long for the thrill of the game.

## EXCEPTION TO THE STANDARD RULE

If you link dependent clauses in a parallel series and those clauses contain commas, you must use a semicolon to separate the clauses.

Classic science fiction villains are found in Star Trek, **with** the Klingons; Battle star Galactica, **with** the Cylon Raiders; and Star Wars, **with** Darth Vader.

## PARALLEL SENTENCES

Sometimes two entire sentences can be parallel.

1. In a democracy we are all equal before the law. In a dictatorship we are all equal before the law.

In a dictatorship we are equal before the police.

--Millor Fernandes

2. I don't **want to achieve** immortality through my work. I **want to achieve** it through not dying.

--Woody Allen

3. Bill is not **the candidate** for the promotion. He is, however, **the candidate** for dismissal.

## PRACTICE EXERCISE

Correct the faulty parallelism in the following sentences

1. I wanted to hike in the woods or just go sailing on the lake.

2. The Chinese, the Japanese, and Russia are all competing for that land.

3. I enjoy taking part in sports rather than just to watch them.

4. She wanted to be a teacher, a coach, or go into law.

5. This summer I want a job more than to go to Disney World.

6. The child was not only rude but also loud would also describe him.

7. Whether to go or staying was the decision I had to make.

8. I love to hike, swimming, and to jog.

9. He began at dawn, worked diligently, and stopping at dusk.

10. A bird stakes out its territory, fights off intruders, and then builds its nest.

## KEY

1. just sail
2. the Russians
3. watching them
4. a lawyer
5. I want to go
6. End sentence with "loud."
7. to stay
8. To swim
9. stopped
10. its intruders