

Parallelism



Parallelism involves using the same grammatical structure for items in a sentence or list. When words within a sentence or between multiple sentences follow the same grammatical form, the ideas presented are easier for the reader to understand. This can happen with words, phrases, or clauses.

Parallel Structure in a Series

When items are presented in a series within the same sentence, those items should be in the same word form. This will provide greater cohesion in the sentence, and help with the overall coherence of the writing.

Incorrect: I enjoy *biking*, *swimming*, and *to ski*.

Correct: I enjoy *biking*, *swimming*, and *skiing*.

Incorrect: She told her students *to study*, *that they should rest a lot*, and *be waking up early for the exam*.

Correct: She told her students *to study*, *to rest a lot*, and *to wake up* early for the exam.

Parallel Structure in Pairs

When two ideas are paired together with connecting words like *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *yet*, *either/or*, *not only/but also*, *than*, or *as*, those ideas should follow the same grammatical form.

Incorrect: Detentions in high school can result in *suspension* or even *being expelled* from school.

Correct: Detentions in high school can result in *suspension* or even *expulsion* from school.

Incorrect: I love *to paint*, but not *drawing*.

Correct: I love *to paint*, but not *to draw*. OR I love *painting*, but not *drawing*.

Parallel Structure in Lists, Headings, and Outlines

When presenting items in a bulleted list (such as in a résumé), or using various headings within the same work (like the headings in this handout), it is important to make sure that each entry matches the others.

Incorrect:

- *Maintained* watering system for three greenhouses
- I *taught* monthly gardening classes to community groups
- *Overseeing* downtown community gardening project

Correct:

- *Maintained* watering system for three greenhouses
- *Taught* monthly gardening classes to community groups
- *Oversaw* downtown community gardening project

Note: While parallelism can be important throughout a paper, parallelism does not mean using the same sentence structure for every sentence in your paper.