

Unparallel Structure

DEFINITION: Parallel structures are phrases or clauses within sentences that repeat the same word forms (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and the like) in the same order to perform the same function.

Parallelism enhances a text's connection to its reader. Parallelism allows writers to emphasize and clearly articulate their meaning.

EXAMPLE OF PARALLEL STRUCTURE:

By junior year, we were accustomed to the typical 400-level English course assignment schedule: a short paper due at mid-term, a long research paper due at the end of the term, and a midterm or final exam given at the end of the term.

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Comment [1]: Each item in the list follows the same pattern: article, adjective, noun, verb, preposition, noun.

EXAMPLE OF UNPARALLEL STRUCTURE:

By junior year, we were accustomed to the typical 400-level English course assignment schedule: a short paper due at mid-term, a long research paper due at the end of the term, and, given during the middle or end of the term, the exams.

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Comment [2]: This item disrupts the pattern. Therefore, the list is not as parallel as the list above.

EXERCISE: IDENTIFY THE UNPARALLEL ELEMENT(S). REVISE THE SENTENCES TO CONTAIN PARALLEL STRUCTURE.

1. Partridge uses repetition to emphasize his vivid memory, layering language, and increase the reader's awareness about imagery.
2. Mary Pickford was America's sweetheart in her early films and wore long blond curls and little girl dresses and a sweet, innocent smile, and she was thirty-five years old.
3. Television commercials urge children to consume sugar cereals, candy, sweet drinks, ignoring the principles of good nutrition.

HAVING TROUBLE? Let's look at clauses, phrases, and words to see how parallelism is constructed with each sentence component. Understanding the building blocks of sentences will make it easier to see parallelism.

Clauses and Parallelism

DEFINITION: Clauses are word groups that contain both subjects and verbs. An independent clause contains a subject and a verb and can stand alone as a sentence.

EXAMPLE: She will attend every game.

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Comment [3]: Subject

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Comment [4]: Verb

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Comment [5]: Subordinating conjunction

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Comment [6]: Subject

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Comment [7]: Verb

DEFINITION: A dependent clause contains a subject and a verb and begins with a subordinating conjunction (although, even though, whenever, before, once, since, etc.). Dependent clauses cannot stand alone and are not complete sentences.

EXAMPLE: Even though Maria cannot play hockey this winter

USE A COMMA TO JOIN A DEPENDENT AND AN INDEPENDENT CLAUSE TOGETHER TO MAKE A COMPLEX SENTENCE.

EXAMPLE: Even though Maria cannot play hockey this winter, she will attend every game.

PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO EACH CLAUSE'S CONSTRUCTION. NOTICE HOW THE ELEMENTS IN THE CLAUSES ARE PARALLEL:

Even though Maria cannot play hockey this winter, she will attend every game.

WHEN TWO INDEPENDENT CLAUSES ARE JOINED TOGETHER WITH A COMMA AND A COORDINATING CONJUNCTION, THEY CREATE A COMPOUND SENTENCE. COMPOUND SENTENCES NEED PARALLELISM, TOO. SEE THE EXAMPLE BELOW.

Harper is considering taking a painting class this summer, and she is hoping that the community center near her house will offer a course.

EXERCISE: IDENTIFY WHETHER OR NOT THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES ARE PARALLEL. IF THE SENTENCES ARE PARALLEL, EXPLAIN WHY. IF NOT, EDIT THEM SO THAT THEY ARE PARALLEL.

1. After the interview, the subject relaxed slightly, but sharing his experiences with his family is something he did not do.
2. While Abraham's bibliography shows that he gathered an interesting array of diverse source materials, his numerous grammatical errors and misspellings show that he did not spend sufficient time editing.
3. Unfortunately, the actor who played Hans is ill, so stepping in will have to be done by the understudy, according to the director.

Let's explore parallelism in phrases next!

Phrases and Parallelism

DEFINITION: A phrase is a word group that lacks a subject, a verb, or both.

THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF PHRASES. LOOK AT THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES OF PHRASES USED TO CREATE PARALLEL STRUCTURE.

EXAMPLE: Oscar won the lottery, built a new house, and repainted his car.

EXAMPLE: Oscar takes good care of his house and of his car.

Sandquist, Amy L. 1/11/13 10:42 AM
Comment [8]: Subject - Maria
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Comment [9]: Verb refers to what she cannot do
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Comment [10]: Object - Hockey
Sandquist, Amy L. 1/11/13 10:42 AM
Comment [11]: Subject - Refers to Maria
Sandquist, Amy L. 1/11/13 10:44 AM
Comment [12]: Verb refers to what she will do
Sandquist, Amy L. 1/11/13 10:45 AM
Comment [13]: Object - Refers to hockey games
Sandquist, Amy L. 3/15/13 2:34 PM
Comment [14]: A coordinating conjunction is a word that joins two words, phrases, or clauses with equal weight. FANBOYS is a great acronym to use to remember coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

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Comment [15]: Verb phrase
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Comment [16]: Verb phrase
Sandquist, Amy L. 1/11/13 12:05 PM
Comment [17]: Verb phrase
Sandquist, Amy L. 1/11/13 12:05 PM
Comment [18]: Prepositional phrase
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Comment [19]: Prepositional phrase

EXAMPLE: Hoping that they could forge a better relationship, Celia and her mother tried to talk openly and to understand the other's concerns.

EXERCISE: ASSESS WHETHER THE FOLLOWING SENTENCE ILLUSTRATES PARALLELISM. IF NOT, REVISE THE SENTENCE SO THAT ITS ELEMENTS ARE PARALLEL.

1. Taking notes is essential for remembering key information and to enhance doodling skills.

Let's explore parallelism in individual words!

Words and Parallelism

WORDS CAN CREATE PARALLELISM, TOO. CHECK OUT THE EXAMPLE BELOW.

EXAMPLE: My family generally does not exchange gifts for birthdays, but last year, my grandma gave me a dress, a locket, and a purse.

EXAMPLE: Though I don't wear a lot of orange, I love the dress, which is orange, brown, and red.

PRACTICE: NOW THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE VARIOUS WAYS TO CREATE PARALLEL STRUCTURE, TAKE A LOOK AT THE SENTENCES BELOW. INDICATE WHETHER OR NOT EACH SENTENCE CONTAINS PARALLEL ELEMENTS. REVISE THOSE SENTENCES WITH UNPARALLEL STRUCTURES.

1. Samuel and Louise enjoy hiking, biking, and to go mountain climbing, and they try to do a different outdoor activity every weekend.
2. The production manager was asked to write quickly, accurately, and in a detailed manner.
3. Her yoga teacher told students to sleep well, to eat well, and that treating others respectfully is beneficial.
4. When similar elements in a sentence share the same grammatical structure, the sentence is smoother, easier to read, and has a more lyrical quality.
5. It is usually safer to walk home with a friend than going all that way at night by yourself.
6. Tyson brings important qualities to his job: hard work, loyalty, and he is innovative.
7. Alice wondered whether she should admit she forgot his birthday or if she should claim her card got lost in the mail.

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Comment [20]: Infinitive phrase

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Comment [21]: Infinitive phrase

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Comment [22]: Article (a) and noun

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Comment [23]: Article (a) and noun

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Comment [24]: Article (a) and noun

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Comment [25]: Adjective

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Comment [26]: Adjective

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Comment [27]: Adjective

8. My favorite winter indulgences are naps, cooking comforting meals, and hot cocoa after long walks.
9. Using communication theory, sport literature, and drawing on the authors' own rich experiences as sport communication professionals, Strategic Sport Communication introduces readers to all aspects of the sport communication industry.
10. Leah lives in Chicago, Illinois, where she enjoys running competitively, painting, and she likes spending time with her three children, Rachel, Robert, and Zoe.