

Parallelism

MAINTAIN PARALLELISM

A sentence may contain a series of words, , or . To make it , be consistent within the series: use with nouns, with verbs, clauses with subordinate clauses, and so on.

Not Parallel: *He bought a tie, a shirt, and purchased a scarf.*
Parallel: *He bought a tie, a shirt, and a scarf.*

The first sentence contains a series that is not consistent. The first two items are nouns, but the third – *purchased a scarf* – contains a verb. In the second sentence, all three items – *tie, shirt, and scarf* – are nouns.

USING PARALLELISM TO CREATE COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

Always compare like things; otherwise, your sentence won't be parallel.

Not parallel: *The mountains of the West are younger than the East.*
[This sentence compares things that are not alike: *the mountains* and *the East*.]

You can correct this problem in two ways:

Parallel: *The mountains of the West are younger than the mountains of the East.*
Parallel: *The mountains of the West are younger than those of the East.*

CREATING PARALLELISM WITH CORRELATIVES

Some pairs of words can help make sentences parallel. These are correlatives: *either ... or; neither ... nor; and not only ... but also*.

When you use these pairs, remember to join the same kinds of elements.

Not Parallel: *In December, the weather is either cool, or we get a warming trend with rain.*
Parallel: *In December, the weather is either cool or warm and rainy.*

NOTE: In the first sentence, *either* introduces an adjective – *cool* – but *or* introduces a clause – *we get a warming trend with rain*. In the second sentence, *or* also introduces adjectives – *warm* and *rainy*.

USING *THAT* TO CREATE PARALLELISM

You can use the relative pronoun *that* to introduce a subordinate clause. But be consistent if you use more than one subordinate clause. Make sure each is introduced the same way.

Not Parallel: *I knew that I wouldn't get there and my friends would be worried.*

Parallel: *I knew that I wouldn't get there and that my friends would be worried.*

NOTE: In the first example, one subordinate clause is introduced by *that*, the other isn't. In the second example, both subordinate clauses are introduced by *that*, the sentence is parallel.

Sample Quiz questions:

1. Choose the sentence that is *not* parallel.
 - a. The house's new owners fixed the porch, planted three pine trees, and the bedrooms were repainted.
 - b. The house's new owners fixed the porch, planted three pine trees, and the repainted the bedrooms.
 - c. Under the house's new owners, the porch was fixed, three pine trees were planted, and the bedrooms were repainted.

Answer: a. The house's new owners fixed the porch, planted three pine trees, and the bedrooms were repainted.

2. Choose the sentence that is *not* parallel.
 - a. In the winter, Sal plays hockey; in the summer, he plays baseball.
 - b. In the winter, Sal plays hockey; in the summer, baseball is played by him.
 - c. In the winter Sal plays hockey, but in the summer he plays baseball.

Answer: b. In the winter, Sal plays hockey; in the summer, baseball is played by him.