

Parallelism

Parallelism in writing is the repetition of the same grammatical forms or structures, (which includes words, phrases, and clauses), when listing items that are being compared or contrasted.

Reading a passage non-parallel structures can be distracting and confusing to the reader because they must try to determine the relationship between similar ideas.

To avoid this, if a list of items begins with a noun, then all the other items in the list should be nouns. Similarly, if the first item in the list is a dependent clause (or adjective, adverb, verb phrase, etc), then all the other items in the list should be independent clauses (or adjectives, adverbs, verb phrase, etc.).

Parallelism is achieved with the use of coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) and correlative conjunctions (both... and, not only... but also, neither ... nor, either... or) to join ideas together.

Look at the following examples:

Parallel	Non-Parallel
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alice enjoys cooking, sewing, and knitting.• Mr. Thomas is educated, sophisticated, and domesticated.• Dolphins swim with grace, power, and swiftness.• The gymnast moves gracefully, powerfully, and effortlessly.• To be healthy, wealthy, and wise is a good thing to strive for.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alice likes cooking, sewing, and to cook.• Mr. Thomas is an educated man, sophisticated, and is domesticated.• Dolphins swim with grace, powerfully, and are swift.• The gymnast moves with grace, powerfully, and without effort.• To be healthy, have wealth and be wise are good things to strive for.

Rewrite these sentences so that they contain parallel structures.

- 1 Betty's sister is an accomplished artist, writes children's books, and a gourmet cook.
- 2 Three things that citizens can do themselves to help reduce air pollution is to join car pools, walking or bicycling to work, or to use mass transportation.
- 3 To learn a foreign language requires a lot of dedication, working hard, and being exposed to the language continuously.
- 4 Thrill seekers must be brave, have cool headedness, yet be wary of caution.
- 5 Individuals who want to accumulate wealth need to save regularly, shopping wisely and frugally, and have an investment plan.
- 6 Bill and Tom's favourite activities are swimming, collecting stamps, and to exercise.
- 7 A good soldier must always act bravely, unselfishly, and with purpose and dedication.
- 8 The president promised voters he would lower taxes, increasing benefits for the elderly, and to allocate more resources to education.
- 9 As a student, the things I hated most were spending time in the library, writing term papers, and tiredness from not getting enough sleep.
- 10 Peacocks have large, brightly-coloured plumage of great beauty.
- 11 Patience, organisation and working consistently hard are essential for success.
- 12 Pharmaceutical students are intelligent, ambitious and work very hard.