

## Parallelism Dos and Don'ts

Parallelism is the use of sentence structure and word form to indicate similarities and differences between ideas when writing. Parallelism can help writers clarify ideas, but faulty parallelism can confuse readers.

DO	DO NOT
<p><b>Use parallel words</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In order for parallelism to show similarity in ideas, similar parts of speech need to be used. <i>Nouns, verbs, and adjectives</i> are all parts of speech that convey different things.</li> </ul> <p><b>Faulty Parallelism:</b> She likes books (n.), clever (adj.) jokes (n.), and working (v.) on puzzles (n.).</p> <p><b>Parallel:</b> She likes books (n.), clever (adj.) jokes (n.), and <u>challenging</u> (adj.) puzzles (n.).</p>	<p><b>Mix verb tenses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar ideas should be shown in similar time frames. This becomes a challenging when different verb tenses are used in a single sentence.</li> </ul> <p><b>Faulty Parallelism:</b> After writing a successful novel, Charlene bought a car, invested in banking, and enjoys collecting art.</p> <p><b>Parallel:</b> After writing a successful novel, Charlene bought a car, invested in banking, and <u>began</u> collecting art.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the infinitive verb is used, “to” does not have to be used before each verb.</li> </ul> <p><b>Parallel:</b> I want <u>to</u> go home, wash up, and eat.</p>
<p><b>Keep phrases parallel</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentences can have many phrases in a series that, when combined, convey a full idea. When a sentence has multiple phrases, the forms of these phrases should be kept parallel by using the same parts of speech and word order throughout.</li> </ul> <p><b>Parallel:</b> Before the storm had ended, but after the worst was over, the Captain radioed in.</p> <p><b>Phrase I:</b> Before (prep.) the storm (n.) had ended (past tense v.)</p> <p><b>Phrase II:</b> After (prep.) the worst (n.) was over (past tense v.)</p>	<p><b>Use improper correlative conjunctions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Correlative conjunctions are pairs of words that join together parts of a sentence. Some correlative conjunctions are: -<i>either / or</i> -<i>neither / nor</i> -<i>not only / but also</i> -<i>both / and</i></li> </ul> <p>Don't forget! When joining two parts of a sentence with a correlative conjunction the parallelism cannot break the conjunctions.</p> <p><b>Faulty Parallelism:</b> “Caffeine is (v.) not only (conj.) in coffee, but is (v.) in chocolate also (broken conj.).”</p> <p><b>Parallel:</b> “Caffeine is (v.) not only (conj.) in coffee, but also (conj.) in chocolate.”</p>

DO	DO NOT
<p><b>Use similar clauses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A <i>clause</i> is a group of words that has a complete subject and predicate. Independent clauses (whole sentences) and dependent clauses (within a sentence) can both be made parallel.</li> </ul> <p><b>Faulty Parallelism:</b> Roseate terns are small diving birds that are adept fliers, that habitate together, and are an endangered species.</p> <p>➤ Remember! If a relative pronoun (who, whom, which, what, this and that) is needed for one clause, it must be repeated for all clauses.</p> <p><b>Parallel:</b> Roseate terns are small diving birds that are adept fliers, that habitate together, and <u>that</u> are an endangered species.</p>	<p><b>Use faulty comparisons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parallelism is used to highlight the similarities and differences between concepts and ideas. If the comparison is not parallel, then point of the comparison is lost.</li> </ul> <p><b>Faulty Parallelism:</b> Many winter sports were adapted from traditional winter transport and military activities, just as many summer sports were.</p> <p>A faulty comparison of the origins of winter sports and summer sports, indicating that summer sports were adapted from traditional winter activities.</p> <p><b>Parallel:</b> Many winter sports were adapted from traditional winter transport and military activities, just as many summer sports were adapted from traditional summer activities.</p>
<p><b>Use parallelism in paragraphs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parallelism in independent clauses (whole sentences) throughout a paragraph strongly emphasizes the argument being made and any contrast being placed against it.</li> </ul> <p><b>Parallel:</b> “A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall. But I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other.” -Abraham Lincoln, 1858</p>	<p><b>Use confusing lists</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lists are meant to be logical and similar or comparable. Lists that are not parallel can be difficult to read.</li> </ul> <p><b>Faulty Parallelism:</b> Please purchase: -galvanized nails -use latex paint -lumber -cut the plywood with a carbide-tipped blade</p> <p><b>Parallel:</b> Please purchase: -galvanized nails -latex paint -lumber -a carbide-tipped blade</p>

Reference

Rosen, Leonard J., and Laurence Behrens. *The Allyn and Bacon Handbook*. 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. Santa Barbara: Longman. 2003. 345-56.