

## Parallel Structure

Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. This can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. The usual way to join parallel structures is with the use of coordinating conjunctions such as "and" or "or."

**Do not mix forms of verbs or adverbs.**

**Incorrect:** Mary likes **hiking**, **swimming**, and **to ride** a bicycle.

**Parallel:** Mary likes **hiking**, **swimming**, and **bicycling**.

**Parallel:** Mary likes **to hike**, **to swim**, and **to ride** a bicycle. Mary likes to **hike**, **swim**, and **ride** a bicycle. (Note: You can use "to" before all the verbs or only before the first one.)

**Incorrect:** The manager wrote his report **quickly**, **accurately**, and **in a detailed manner**.

**Parallel:** The manager wrote his report **quickly**, **accurately**, and **thoroughly**.

A parallel structure that begins with clauses must keep using clauses. Don't change to another pattern or change the verb's voice (from active to passive or vice versa).

**Incorrect:** He was a poor student because he **waited** until the last minute to study, **completed** his lab reports carelessly, and **his motivation was** low.

**Parallel:** He was a poor student because he **waited** until the last minute to study, **completed** his lab reports carelessly, and **lacked** motivation.

**Incorrect:** The salesman expected **to present** his product, **that there would be** time to show his slide presentation, and **questions would be asked** by prospective buyers.

**Parallel:** The salesman expected **that he would present** his product, **that there would be** time to show his slide presentation, and **that prospective buyers would ask** him questions.

Faulty Parallelism	Corrected Version
Formerly, science was taught by the textbook method, while now the laboratory method is employed.	Formerly, science was taught by the textbook method; now it is taught by the laboratory method.

An article or a preposition applying to all the members of a series must either be used only before the first term or else be repeated before each term.

Faulty Parallelism	Corrected Version
The French, the Italians, Spanish, and Portuguese	The French, the Italians, the Spanish, and the Portuguese
In spring, summer, or in winter	In spring, summer, or winter

**Correlative expressions** (*both, and; not, but; not only, but also; either, or; first, second, third,* etc.) should be followed by the same grammatical construction or by rearranging the sentence.

Faulty Parallelism	Corrected Version
It was both a long ceremony and very tedious.	The ceremony was both long and tedious.
A time not for words but action	A time not for words but for action
Either you must grant his request or incur his ill will.	You must either grant his request or incur his ill will.

When **making comparisons**, the things you compare should be written in parallel structures.

Faulty Parallelism	Corrected Version
My income is smaller than my wife.	My income is smaller than my wife's.

### Shifts

If you're writing in the present tense, don't shift verbs to the past tense (or vice versa) unless you have a good reason to do so.

**Incorrect:** They *took* me to the hospital, and *I'm waiting* to see a doctor when my best friend *is* wheeled in on a stretcher.

**Correct:** They *took* me to the hospital, and *I was waiting* to see a doctor when my best friend *was* wheeled in on a stretcher.

If you use *you, we, I,* or *one*, remain consistently within the same pronoun case.

**Incorrect:** *One* should be careful whenever *you* write.

**Correct:** *You* should be careful whenever *you* write.

If you use third-person plural *people* don't shift to the second-person *you*.

**Incorrect:** People enjoy themselves at UCLA basketball games. You don't have to be an expert in basketball to get caught up in the crowd's enthusiasm.

**Correct:** People enjoy themselves at UCLA basketball games. It isn't necessary to be an expert in basketball to get caught up in the crowd's enthusiasm.

If you use the active voice, don't shift to the passive voice (or vice versa).

**Incorrect:** My sister enjoys art, but music is preferred by my brother.

**Correct:** My sister enjoys art, but my brother prefers music.