

Parallelism



When words within a sentence or between multiple sentences follow the same grammatical form, the ideas presented are easier for the reader to understand. Parallelism involves using the same grammatical structure for items in a sentence or list. This can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. It is important to note, however, that parallelism does not mean using the same sentence structure for every sentence in your paper. The following are different forms of parallelism:

Parallel Structure in a Series

When items are presented in a series within the same sentence, those items should be in the same word form. This will provide greater flow in the sentence, and help with the coherence of the writing.

Incorrect: I like hiking, swimming, and to ski.

Correct: I like *hiking*, *swimming*, and *skiing*.

Incorrect: He told his students to study, that they should rest a lot, and be waking up early for the exam.

Correct: He told his students *to study*, *to rest* a lot, and *to wake up* early for the exam.

Parallel Structure in Pairs

When two ideas are paired together with connecting words like *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *yet*, *either . . . or*, *not only . . . but also*, *than*, or *as*, those ideas should follow the same grammatical form.

Incorrect: Detentions in high school can result in *suspension* or even *being expelled* from school.

Correct: Detentions in high school can result in *suspension* or even *expulsion* from school.

Incorrect: I love *to paint*, but not *drawing*.

Correct: I love *to paint*, but not *to draw*. OR I love *painting*, but not *drawing*.

Parallel Structure in Lists, Headings, and Outlines

When presenting items in a bulleted list, or having various headings within the same work (like the headings in this handout), it is important to make sure that each entry matches the others.

Incorrect:

- Worked with at-risk students
- I played intermural soccer
- Acting in the school play

Correct:

- Worked with at-risk students
- Played intermural soccer
- Acted in the school play