



# WRITING CENTRE

Sentences that have a series of words or phrases should be structured in parallel form. Parallel structure simply means that words or phrases follow the same balanced format. Parallel structure adds clarity to writing.

## UNDERSTANDING PARALLEL STRUCTURE

Parallel structure (also called parallelism) is the repetition of a chosen grammatical form within a sentence. By making each compared item or idea in your sentence follow the same grammatical pattern, you create a parallel construction.

**Example:**

**Not Parallel:** Ellen likes hiking, the rodeo, and to take afternoon naps.

**Parallel:** Ellen likes hiking, attending the rodeo, and taking afternoon naps.

**Parallel:** Ellen likes to hike, attend the rodeo, and take afternoon naps.

## USING PARALLEL STRUCTURE WITH COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

When you connect two or more clauses or phrases with a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, or so), use parallel structure.

**Example:**

**Not Parallel:** My best friend took me dancing and to a show.

**Parallel:** My best friend took me to a dance and a show.

## WITH CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS

When you connect two clauses or phrases with a correlative conjunction (not only...but also, either...or, neither...nor, if...then, etc.), use parallel structure.

**Example:**

**Not Parallel:** My dog not only likes to play fetch, but also chase cars.

**Parallel:** My dog not only likes to play fetch, but he also likes to chase cars.

**Parallel:** My dog likes not only to play fetch, but also to chase cars.

## WITH PHRASES OR CLAUSES OF COMPARISON

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When you connect two clauses or phrases with a word of comparison, such as *than* or *as*, use parallel structure.

**Example:**

**Not Parallel:** I would rather pay for my education than financial aid.

**Parallel:** I would rather pay for my education than receive financial aid.

## WITH LISTS

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When you are comparing items in a list, use parallel structure.

**Example:**

**Not Parallel:** John Price criticizes public schools because they are compulsory, funded by the government, and destroy students' humanity.

**Parallel:** John Price criticizes public schools because they are compulsory, government funded, and normalizing.

**Parallel:** John Price criticizes public schools because they require students to attend, receive money from the government, and destroy students' humanity.

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### Some things to remember when checking sentences for parallel structure:

1. Figure out what parts of the sentence are being compared.
  2. Decide whether they are parallel, i.e. arranged or constructed in the same way.
  3. If they are not, make them parallel by making the grammatical construction the same in each part.
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