

## Johnson County Community College PARALLELISM

Many sentences contain what we might call *parallel thoughts*. For example, you might say, "Lee had a great time scuba-diving and water-skiing on her vacation." *Scuba-diving* and *water-skiing* are parallel thoughts; that is, they are both things that Lee had a great time doing. By expressing both of them with *-ing* words, the sentence emphasizes this parallelism. A clumsier way of saying the same thing might be, "Lee had a great time scuba-diving and also she water-skied during her vacation." Here the two parallel thoughts are expressed in non-parallel forms of words, and the sense of their parallel relationship is weakened.

### I. When elements are parallel in thought, use parallel forms to express them.

All of the elements in the following series are *-ing* words; they are arranged in a parallel structure.

cooking, eating, cleaning

All of these elements are infinitive (*to*) forms of verbs; their structure is parallel.

to cook, to eat, to clean

Again, a parallel structure.

have cooked, have eaten, have cleaned

All are words that are used to describe a person. These modifiers are arranged in a parallel structure.

pretty, tall, friendly

If one form of a verb is mixed with another form of the same verb in a sentence, the parallel structure is lost. Now the elements are of different forms; there is no parallel structure in this series.

cooking, to eat, have cleaned

Remember: when you make any kind of list, put all the items in the same form.

## Practice Exercise A

Fill in the blank with the correct form of the verb given in the parentheses. The first verb in the series will tell you which form to use. Be sure to maintain parallel structure.

Example: dancing, singing (sing), laughing (laugh)

1. to cheer, \_\_\_\_\_(shout), \_\_\_\_\_ (applaud)
2. pushed, \_\_\_\_\_(pull), \_\_\_\_\_ (shove)
3. have written, \_\_\_\_\_(seal), \_\_\_\_\_ (mail)
4. ran, \_\_\_\_\_(walk), \_\_\_\_\_ (crawl)
5. building, \_\_\_\_\_(paint), \_\_\_\_\_ (whitewash)
6. rose, \_\_\_\_\_(sink), \_\_\_\_\_ (reappear)
7. to love, \_\_\_\_\_ (honor), \_\_\_\_\_ (obey)
8. coughed, \_\_\_\_\_ (sneeze), \_\_\_\_\_ (sniffle)
9. swimming, \_\_\_\_\_ (sail), \_\_\_\_\_ (row)
10. chewing, \_\_\_\_\_ (eat), \_\_\_\_\_ (swallow)

## II. Balance a noun with a noun, a verb with a verb, a modifier with a modifier, and so on.

Whenever possible, words of the same kind should be used to do the same kinds of jobs in a sentence.

In the following sentence, *charming*, an *-ing* word, is balanced with *beautiful*. They are in parallel structure, however, because they are both modifiers; that is, they both describe a person.

She is charming and beautiful.

Both phrases describe her, but *charming* is a modifier, whereas *beauty* is a noun. Therefore, the sentence has now lost its parallel structure.

She is charming and has beauty.

Although the following sentence may appear to have faulty parallelism, it actually does have a parallel structure. In this case, *tacos* and *enchiladas* are objects of the verb *to eat*. What do we like to eat? We like to eat tacos and we also like to eat enchiladas.

We like to eat tacos and enchiladas.

The following sentence is parallel; *tacos* and *enchiladas* are both nouns.

We like tacos and enchiladas.

The next sentence has lost its parallel structure. *Tacos* is a noun; *to eat enchiladas* is a combination of a verb form and a noun.

We like tacos and to eat enchiladas.

## Practice Exercise B

Add one element to each series. Make sure that the new element is parallel to those provided.

Example: hungry, thirsty, **tired**

1. proud, brave, \_\_\_\_\_
2. blonde, blue-eyed, \_\_\_\_\_
3. camping, hiking, \_\_\_\_\_
4. bought, traded, \_\_\_\_\_
5. to try, to succeed, \_\_\_\_\_
6. playing baseball, playing football, \_\_\_\_\_
7. small, cute, \_\_\_\_\_
8. planting, reaping, \_\_\_\_\_
9. wished, hoped, \_\_\_\_\_
10. a ball, a bat, \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Use parallel constructions for words joined by such connectors as *and*, *but*, *nor*, or.

Note that the three elements in the following sentence are all *-ing* words. This sentence contains proper parallelism.

I enjoy reading, writing, and conducting experiments in a laboratory.

In the next example, the parallelism is faulty. *Cute* is a modifier; *behaves well* is a form of a verb. This sentence may be rewritten as follows:

Our baby is cute and behaves well.

Our baby is cute and well-behaved.

*Crabby* and *busy* are both modifiers, but *doesn't know what to say* is a form of a verb.

Whenever I try to talk to him he is crabby, busy, or doesn't know what to say.

It would be hard to find a modifier that would take the place of the verb form here. Instead, the sentence might be rewritten. Now *crabby* and *busy* are parallel modifiers joined by *or*, while *he is* and *he does know* are parallel subjects and verbs joined by *or else*.

Whenever I try to talk to him he is crabby or busy, or else he doesn't know what to say.

### Practice Exercise C

Complete the following sentences by filling in the blanks. Be sure to maintain parallel structure. Underline the original part of the sentence to which your addition is parallel.

Example: Eduardo has always enjoyed fishing and hunting.

1. You can see the moon and \_\_\_\_\_ in the sky tonight.
2. As an accountant, Phyllis adds \_\_\_\_\_ and figures all day long.
3. I will probably be washing the dishes or \_\_\_\_\_ when you arrive.
4. He is old but \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Filling the gas tank and \_\_\_\_\_ are two of the responsibilities of a gas station attendant.
6. A teacher expects his students to do their homework, to attend classes regularly, and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Before she left, she combed her hair, polished her fingernails, and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. When customers are not satisfied, they return the merchandise or \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The day is sunny, hot, and \_\_\_\_\_.
10. I want to swim, travel, and \_\_\_\_\_ this summer.

### **Practice Review Exercise: Points I, II, III**

All of the following sentences contain errors in parallel structure. Revise and rewrite the sentences in the space provided.

Example: You put the cheese between two slices of bread and frying it in a pan.

**You put the cheese between two slices of bread and fry it in a pan.**

1. He was an outlaw, a gunslinger, and unhappy.
2. A lifeguard supervises the beach, is flirting with pretty girls, and rescues swimmers who are having difficulty.
3. Lynn is preparing to enter college, to study English, and acting in dramatic productions.
4. A good friend is kind, honest, and helps you when you need him.
5. Many people enjoy drinking, smoking, and to play pool in a bar.

6. To be a doctor, one must have ambition, persistence, and be willing to work long hours.
7. The cat purred, meowed, and cleaning itself.
8. He was forced to pawn his watch; sell his radio, and trying to find a new job.
9. To be or not being; that is the question.
10. We will provide feedback but to proofread is not acceptable.

**IV. Use parallel structure with such constructions as *either...or, neither...nor, not...but, not only...but also, both...and.***

Either **going for a ride** or **to lie in the sun** is my idea of a good time.

This sentence may be rewritten to put the elements in a parallel structure:

Either **going for a ride** or **lying in the sun** is my idea of a good time.

In the following sentence, *was he a great man* contains both a subject--*he*--and a verb--*was*; *an excellent writer* contains neither. This is an especially common error.

Not only was he a great man, but also an excellent writer.

The sentence may be rewritten; now the subject and verb have been moved out of the parallel sections, and there is proper parallelism between *a great man* and *an excellent writer*.

He was not only a great man, but also an excellent writer.

**or**

The sentence can also be rewritten with a subject and a verb in each clause.

Not only was he a great man, but he was also an excellent writer.

## Practice Exercise D

Write "P" if the sentence has proper parallelism or "X" if the parallelism is faulty. Then correct the faulty parallelism.

Example: Either you come here or I will go there.  P

1. He is neither honest nor running for the Senate this year. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Janet is not only a fine pianist, but also an expert dancer. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The dog is both noisy and he chases all the other animals on the block. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I can't make up my mind whether to go or to stay. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Pete not only failed the test but also was caught trying to cheat. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Neither Irving nor I care for dessert. \_\_\_\_\_
7. He is both a gentleman and a scholar. \_\_\_\_\_
8. To be a good parent, one must be dedicated, caring, and want the best for his children. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Either I am crazy or I heard that phone ring. \_\_\_\_\_
10. The books are on the shelf, in the cabinet, and on top of the table. \_\_\_\_\_

### V. Make sure that *parallel groups of words* in a sentence have parallel structure.

The two groups of words do not have a parallel structure in the following sentence. One begins with the *to* form of a verb, and the other does not.

I promise to be a good husband and that I will help clean the apartment.

This sentence may be rewritten as follows:

I promise that I will be a good husband and that I will help clean the apartment.

The two separate elements of the next sentence do not coincide. There is no parallel structure.

By changing the oil myself, and because I know how to do tune-ups, I save money on the care of my car.

The sentence may be rewritten as follows:

By changing the oil myself and by doing my own tune-ups, I save money on the care of my car.

Before: She got a new job with a higher salary, increased benefits, and she also works fewer hours than before.

After: She got a new job with a higher salary, increased benefits, and shorter working hours.

### Practice Exercise E

Underline the part of the sentence that is not parallel and write the correction in the space provided.

Example:

Our house is located near the bus station, the laundromat, and is within walking distance of a supermarket. **replace underlined portion with "the"**

1. By taking lessons and because she practices daily, Andrea has become a fine violinist.
2. My dream is to have a good job, a family, and buying a house in the country.
3. Going to college, choosing a career, and to find a good job are not easy these days.
4. He said that he would visit, to stay for a week, and that he would help with chores around the house.

5. I bought a car with whitewall tires, leather seats, and it has an AM-FM radio.
6. She asked me where I lived and my telephone number.
7. Waiting for the bus and to become a bit nervous, Hal started biting his nails.
8. I promise to dress properly and that I will arrive on time.
9. Doris wants to be a doctor, a veterinarian, or she will study dentistry.
10. To finish an assignment and turning it in is an enormous relief.

### **Practice Review Exercise Points I, II, III, IV, V**

All of the following sentences lack parallel construction. Rewrite the sentences, eliminating the errors.

Example:

He accepted the money, promised to spend it wisely, and was going for a ride in his car.

**He accepted the money, promised to spend it wisely, and went for a ride in his car.**

1. Not only was she attractive, but also she had a good sense of humor.
2. They went to Miami Beach on their vacation for swimming and to relax.
3. The book is exciting and does not take long to read.
4. Her coat has six brass buttons, flared sleeves, and there is a detachable hood.
5. Eating breakfast, eating lunch, and to eat dinner are my three favorite activities of the day.

6. Carmen was either late or she arrived early.
7. The fullback is clever, quick, and runs with power.
8. We went to the concert with Fred, with Jane, and Zelda came along also.
9. They were interested in buying the air conditioner, but not willing to spend so much money
10. The folders are in the "A" drawer, on the table, and sitting on the floor.

### **How to Avoid Faulty Parallelism**

1. Remember that elements which are parallel in thought should be expressed in parallel forms.
2. Use parallel structure for elements joined by such words as *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *either...or*, *neither...nor*, *not...but*, *not only...but also*.
3. Make sure parallel groups of words in a sentence have parallel structures.

### **Practice Review**

Underline the word or phrase that maintains the parallel structure in each sentence.

Example: I enjoy working hard, getting paid well, and (to get a sense of satisfaction, achieving a sense of satisfaction).

1. He admitted to robbing the store and (escaping in the green Ford, that he escaped in the green Ford).
2. She achieved her fame by working hard and (having good luck, she was lucky).
3. Terry hates to get up in the morning, to brush his teeth, and (combing his hair, to comb his hair).
4. I admire his talent, his ambition, and (his ability to keep cool, he was able to keep cool).

5. The drummer kept the beat, the guitarist played the melody, and (the singing was done by the piano player, the piano player sang).
6. She went either with my sister, with my brother, or (by herself, alone).
7. The bull was snorting and (charging at us, started to charge at us).
8. In grammar school I learned to read, to write, and (arithmetic, to do arithmetic).
9. My aunt was charming, helpful, and (kind, always doing kind things).
10. We decided to go to the store, to eat at the restaurant, and (to drive around the park, go driving around the park).

Underline the element in each series that is **not** parallel to the other two.

Example: 1. standing in line

to cash a check

speaking to my friend

2. on my own

in the forest

looking out for bears

3. tall

handsome

with brown hair

4. looking outside

was in the room

wanted to open the window

5. on the beach

in a tent

making a fire

6. to put on slippers

reading the newspaper

smoking a pipe

7. by raking the leaves

mowing the lawn

by trimming the shrubs

8. sturdy

made of wood

has compartments for pencils

9. green eyes

a long, curling tail

on the sofa

10. to have a good time

carrying her baby

walking through the park

Complete the following sentences by filling in the blanks. Be careful to maintain parallel structure. Underline the original part of the sentence to which your addition is parallel.

Example: 1. It is my ambition to be successful and to be content.

2. Rod can speak both English and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. She said that she would be *on* either the 7:00 bus or \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The brown puppy was wagging its tail and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The cabinet he built is made of pine and \_\_\_\_\_.
6. We strolled under the boardwalk \_\_\_\_\_.
7. He wants to move to Mexico and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Judy kept a rabbit's foot, a four-leaf clover, and a \_\_\_\_\_ in her drawer.
9. When we visited California, we rode cable cars, went to Fisherman's Wharf, and \_\_\_\_\_.
10. When left alone, he gets sad, lonely, and \_\_\_\_\_.

Each of the following sentences has an error in parallelism. Write a corrected version of each sentence in the space provided.

Example: 1. He admitted the vandalism and that he should be punished.

**He admitted that he did commit the vandalism and that he should be punished.**

2. We were surprised by the gift but appreciating it.
3. Dribbling, shooting, and to pass are important skills in basketball.
4. The dog dug up the bone and finding it to his liking.
5. Ramon knows that he should work on his writing and to improve his spelling.
6. His lunch included soup, a tuna sandwich, potato chips, and there was also some dessert.
7. I respected his intellect, his strength, and he was also very funny.

8. It would make my day complete to see you, going to a movie, and to have dinner with you.

9. That cigarette has a filter and is mentholated.

10. Marianne spends her day attending classes, she studies, and to listen to music.

11. You intended to be nice but you appeared mean.

12. The dean told the teacher that classes were suspended and to allow the students to go home.

13. She could read on a bus, in an elevator, or when she waited in line at the bank.

14. The camper learned how to tie a knot, how to start a fire, and horseback riding.

15. That car with four-wheel drive can get out of mud, of snow, and deep potholes.

16. There were news items about the rising price of coffee, the increased crime rate, and how we are running short of energy.

17. The leaves changed color and they were falling from the trees.

18. Going for a walk in the evening and to meet a friend on the street is a simple and great pleasure.

19. The movie starred Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor, and George Segal and Sandy Dennis also had starring roles.

20. Traffic makes me irritable and my temperature rises.

Compose a sentence using the elements provided. If the elements are not parallel, make them so.

Example: 1. joking around                      pulling her hair

**He thought he was joking around as he was pulling her hair.**

2. that we had won the lottery                      that we had become instant millionaires

3. to chase a rabbit                      barked                      growled

4. set the table                      then served the food

5. to seek                      to find

6. to go to the dance                      choosing a partner                      dancing

7. to watch commercials                      listening to music                      drinking beer

8. that he could stand no more                      that he would lose his temper

9. intelligence                      integrity

10. keeping good notes                      to use a tape recorder

11. with my parents                      to the movies

12. applying for a job                      scheduled an interview

13. steep                      dangerous                      slippery

- |                                |                                       |              |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| 14. on Mother's Day            | on Father's Day                       | Thanksgiving |
| 15. crying                     | sad                                   |              |
| 16. in the drugstore           | on the shelf                          |              |
| 17. If I got the job           | when I would start working            |              |
| 18. to build a fire            | roasting marshmallows                 |              |
| 19. that I was her best friend | that she wanted to read me her poetry |              |
| 20. to have friends            | to be free                            |              |

Rewrite each passage in the space provided, eliminating any cases of faulty parallelism.

1. A library is a good place to spend an afternoon and relaxing. You can read the newspaper from any major city, spend time looking for a good novel, or listening to a record. Librarians can tell you where to find a particular book and a quiet place to read it. Many libraries have display halls where you can observe artwork or just strolling around.

People find many different things to do in the library. There is usually someone studying or to write a research paper; there are those who read periodicals and those just chatting with a friend. All things considered, the library is an excellent place for meeting people, to read, or to relax.

2. Citizen's band radios are becoming very popular these days. People install them in their cars, while boating, or use them at home. The radios can be a lot of fun if you make contact with a "buddy" or just talking on the air waves until someone answers. Truck drivers have been using them for a long time but now doctors, housewives, and dog-catchers are able to use them as well. C.B. radios are especially useful if you are driving and are lost, having trouble with your automobile, or want to avoid speed traps on the highway. As commonly happens in America, when a new item becomes popular, Hollywood producers make a movie about it. The C.B. may be more than just a fad; however, the radios are practical, fun to use, and they don't cost that much money.

3. Paul Newman is one of America's most popular actors. Not only is he a big drawing card, he also has a lot of talent. He has played in many pictures including *The Hustler* and *The Sting*, and starring most of the time. Many women feel he is handsome and has sex appeal; he appears to be tough and have a strong will to many men.

In *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* he appeared with Robert Redford, another extremely popular American actor. In that movie, they robbed banks, diving off a steep cliff, and to live with a beautiful woman who was played by Katherine Ross.

Paul Newman lives with his wife, Joanne Woodward, in Connecticut. They live in a beautiful town, sharing a lovely house, and that the rumor is they have a very happy marriage.