

Parallel Structure

Parallel structure is using the same pattern of words in a series. The words “balance” or match each other’s form in a series. Here are a few ways to keep your sentences parallel.

1. Use the *-ing* form (gerund) of words.

Not Parallel: Mark likes *hiking, to swim,* and *he likes to ride his bicycle.*

Mark likes *hiking, swimming,* and *bicycling.*

Not Parallel: The job requires typing, filing invoices, and you make coffee.

Parallel: The job requires *typing, filing invoices, and making coffee.*

2. Use infinitive phrases (*to + action verb*).

Not Parallel: Mark likes *hiking, to swim,* and *he likes to ride his bicycle.*

Parallel: Joe likes *to hike, to swim, and to ride* a bicycle.

OR Joe likes *TO hike, swim, and ride* a bicycle.

(**Note:** You can use "to" before all the verbs in a sentence or only before the first one.)

Not Parallel: Mom wants *to visit* a museum, *to shop* at the mall, and *swimming* in the lake.

Parallel: Mom wants *to visit* a museum, *to shop* at the mall, and *to swim* in the lake.

OR Mom wants *to visit* a museum, *shop* at the mall, and *swim* in the lake.

Not Parallel: Dad asked me to wash the dishes, be cleaning my room, and taking out the trash.

Parallel: Dad asked me to wash the dishes, clean my room, and take out the trash.

3. Use similar forms of words.

Not Parallel: He was a poor student because he *waited* until the last minute to study, *completed* his work carelessly, and *his motivation was* low. (*Notice that two of the verbs used a past tense ending of -ed, but one verb didn't*)

Parallel: He was a poor student because he *waited* until the last minute to study, *completed* his work carelessly, and *lacked* motivation. (all 3 use a past tense verb now)

Not Parallel: She was ready after she washed the clothes, dried them, and then she had to fold them.

Parallel: She was ready after *she washed, dried, and folded the clothes.*

4. Use clauses (short phrases with verbs):

Not Parallel: The coach told the players *they should get* a lot of sleep, *they should not eat* too much, and *to do* some warm-up exercises before the game.

Parallel: The coach told the players *they should get* a lot of sleep, *they should not eat* too much, and *they* _____ some warm-up exercises before the game.

OR The coach told the players *they should get* a lot of sleep, *not eat* too much, and _____ some warm-up exercises before the game.

Not Parallel: Tim expected *that he would read* his report, *be showing* his photographs, and *that the teacher would give him a good grade*.

Parallel: Tim expected that he would read his report, show his photographs and *earn* a good grade.

**NOW SCROLL DOWN TO
PRACTICE IT YOURSELF.**

Practice

1. Rewrite this sentence using the *-ing* form:

I enjoy my work with crafts, playing the piano, and to read.

2. Rewrite these two sentences using the infinitive form (*to + action verb*):

a. *He likes camping, to golf, and baseball on TV.*

b. *Remember to eat healthful snacks, exercising, and be sure to sleep well.*

3. Make these parallel.

a. *He wrote his report quickly, with accuracy, and in an honest manner.*

He wrote his report _____ly, _____ly, and _____ly.

b. *Your car is in dirty condition, looking old, and it has a dent.*

Your car is _____, _____, and _____.

c. *A dictionary can be used to find definitions, spellings that are correct, and looking up pronunciations.*

A dictionary can be used to find _____, _____, _____,
and _____.

d. *Emma is serving salad, spaghetti, and is having three desserts.*

Emma is serving _____.

e. *I believe in wishing on a star, to hold my breath past a cemetery, and ghosts that can be seen at midnight.*

I believe in _____.

SCROLL DOWN FOR THE ANSWERS.

HERE ARE SOME POSSIBILITIES TO MAKE THOSE SENTENCES PARALLEL:

1. Rewrite this sentence using the *-ing* form:

I enjoy my work with crafts, playing the piano, and to read.

Parallel: I enjoy working with crafts, playing the piano, and reading.

2. Rewrite these two sentences using the infinitive form (*to + action verb*):

a. *He likes camping, to golf, and baseball on TV.*

Parallel: He likes to camp, to golf, and to watch baseball on TV **OR** He likes to camp, golf, and watch baseball on TV.

b. Remember to eat healthful snacks, exercising, and be sure to sleep well.

Parallel: Remember to eat healthful snacks, exercise, and sleep well **OR** Remember to eat healthful snacks, exercise, and sleep well.

c. He wrote his report quickly, with accuracy, and in an honest manner.

Parallel: He wrote his report *quickly, accurately, and honestly.*

d. Your car is in dirty condition, looking old, and it has a dent.

Parallel: Your car is *dirty, old, and dented.*

c. A dictionary can be used to find definitions, spellings that are correct, and looking up pronunciations.

Parallel: A dictionary can be used to find *definitions, correct spellings, and pronunciations.*

d. Emma is serving salad, spaghetti, and is having three desserts.

Emma is serving *salad, spaghetti, and three desserts.*

e. I believe in wishing on a star, to hold my breath past a cemetery, and ghosts that can be seen at midnight.

I believe in *wishing on a star, holding my breath past a cemetery, and seeing ghosts after midnight.*

