

PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION

Parallel construction helps your reader follow your ideas. Whenever a sentence branches into parts, you should keep the parts parallel by balancing them: a clause with a clause, a phrase with a phrase, a participle with a participle, an infinitive with an infinitive, a noun (or noun phrase) with a noun, and so on.

The coach warned him that the field was slippery and that thunderstorms were approaching from the west. (This sentence branches into two parts, which are parallel because each is a noun clause.)

The smugglers toiled in secret and in silence.

(The two parts in this sentence are parallel because each is a prepositional phrase.)

What are the three parts in the following sentence that need to be parallel?

My brother planned to drive to Atlanta, to fly to Miami, and to cruise to Puerto Rico.

The coordinating conjunctions *and, or, nor, but, yet* are words requiring parallel construction.

Faulty parallelism: *The animals seemed to sense their danger and that they knew what they must do to survive.*

Proper parallelism: *The animals seemed to sense their danger and to know what they must do to survive.*

Faulty parallelism: *He liked his job because the boss was fair, they paid him well, and he found the work interesting.*

Proper parallelism: *He liked his job because the boss was fair, the pay was generous, and the work was interesting.*

The phrases - *either...or; neither...nor; not only.....but also; both.....and; whether...or* - should also be followed by parallel construction.

Faulty parallelism: *She either sent the memo or someone else did.*

Proper parallelism: *Either she sent the memo or someone else did.*

Faulty parallelism: *Not only did he lecture for two hours, but asked questions afterward.*

Proper parallelism: *Not only did he lecture for two hours, but he asked questions afterward.*

To make a parallel construction clear, you will often need to repeat a preposition, an article, a relative pronoun, a subordinating conjunction, a helping verb, or an infinitive.

Juan helps around the house by cooking and by ironing his own shirts. (preposition)

He hoped that she would attend and that she would wear the blue dress. (subordinate conjunction)

PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION - PRACTICE

Rewrite the following sentences so that they are parallel.

1. Ramon likes dancing and to play tennis.

2. Each player is taught to work with the team and that good sportsmanship must be shown.

3. Sondra was young, yet well-educated and had poise.

4. Last week, I finished my term paper, took all my finals, and an interview for a summer job.

Indicate which of the following sentences are parallel.

5. a. After exercise class, I woke up with stiff knees, throbbing legs, and aching arms.
b. After exercise class, I woke up with stiff knees, throbbing legs, and arms that ached.
c. After exercise class, I woke up with stiff knees, throbbing legs, and my arms ached.
6. a. After the camping trip, I was exhausted, irritable, and wanted to eat.
b. After the camping trip, I was exhausted, I was irritable, and hungry.
c. After the camping trip, I was exhausted, irritable, and hungry.
7. a. Each night, Fred puts out the trash, checks the locks on the doors, and the burglar alarm is turned on.
b. Each night, Fred puts out the trash, checks the locks on the doors, and turns on the burglar alarm..
c. Each night, Fred puts out the trash, checks the locks on the doors, and the burglar alarm.
8. a. Allan dreamed he was audited by the IRS, investigated by Sixty Minutes, and bill collectors were after him.
b. Allan dreamed he was audited by the IRS, investigated by Sixty Minutes, and chased by bill collectors.
c. Allan dreamed he was audited by the IRS, Sixty Minutes was investigating him, and bill collectors were chasing him.
9. a. The refrigerator has a cracked vegetable drawer, missing shelves, and a strange freezer smell.
b. The refrigerator has a cracked vegetable drawer, one of the shelves is missing, and a strange freezer smell.
c. The refrigerator has a cracked vegetable drawer, missing shelves, and has a strange freezer smell.
10. a. One option the employees had was to take a cut in pay; the other was longer hours of work.
b. One option the employees had was to take a cut in pay; the other was working longer hours.
c. One option the employees had was to take a cut in pay; the other was to work longer hours.