

# 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.

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

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

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

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*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.