

PARALLELISM

Faulty parallelism happens when students **do not** use the same word patterns to show that two or more ideas are equally important. Parallel structures are usually joined by coordinating conjunctions such as *and* or *or*.

1. Words and Phrases:

Students often mix patterns when using the –ing or gerund form of words.

Examples:

Not parallel: Julia likes **swimming**, **walking**, and **to ride** her bicycle.

Parallel: Julia likes **swimming**, **walking**, and **riding** her bicycle.

Not parallel: The instructor asked José to finish his project **neatly**, **quickly**, and ***in a correct manner***.

Parallel: The instructor asked José to finish his project **neatly**, **quickly**, and ***correctly***.

With infinitive phrases:

Not parallel: Cesar's mother asked him **to go** to the store, **to stop** at the post office, and **return** a book to the library.

Parallel: Cesar's mother asked him **to go** to the store, **to stop** at the post office, and **to return** a book to the library.

(Note: Use "to" before all the verbs in a sentence or only before the first one.)

2. Clauses:

If you start a parallel structure with clauses, you must continue with clauses.

Examples:

Not parallel: The sales manager told the car sales staff *that they should greet* customers with a smile, *that they should be* knowledgeable about all of the vehicles, and *to not let* customers leave without purchasing a car or truck.

Parallel: The sales manager told the car sales staff *that they should greet* customers with a smile, *that they should be* knowledgeable about all of the vehicles, and *that they should not let* customers leave without purchasing a car or truck.

3. Lists:

All elements in a list must be in the same form.

Examples:

Not parallel: The Writing Center offers Writing Center students a variety of resources: English instructors on duty, quiet study rooms, and using computers.

Parallel: The Writing Center offers Writing Center students a variety of resources: English instructors on duty, quiet study rooms, and computers for student use.

How to proofread your paper for parallelism:

- ❖ Read through your paper pausing at the words “and” and “or.” Look at the words on each side of “and” and “or” to check if the words that are joined are parallel. If they aren’t, make them parallel.
- ❖ Before writing a sentence with several items in a list, put them in a column to check whether they are parallel.
- ❖ Read the items in a list or the items being compared out loud. Do the words sound alike? For example, does the sentence begin with a list of –ing words? Is there a repetition of rhythm? If the sentence sounds awkward, it may need to be made parallel.