

## PARALLELISM

Parallelism involves using similar forms of words or phrases to show similar ideas. This frequently means using the same form for words or phrases in a list, as in:

I enjoy swimming, skiing, and hunting.

This sentence, which employs parallel construction in the -ing forms is much clearer and smoother than the following sentence, which is not parallel:

I enjoy swimming, skiing, and to hunt.

Consider each pair below:

1. I came. I would see and be conquering.
2. I came. I saw. I conquered.
3. Jean is both an artist and she spends time at athletics.
4. Jean is both an artist and an athlete.
5. He slowed down and came sliding and the winning run was scored.
6. He slowed down, slid, and scored the winning run.

Do 2, 4, and 6 sound more smoothly and clearly written to you? The underlined parts of 2, 4, and 6 are parallel. Two or more single words (slowed, slid, scored) can be parallel as can entire sentences (I came. I saw. I conquered.) But remember, parallel words must have the same grammatical form - a noun must be balanced with a noun, a past tense verb with a past tense verb.

In the following examples, note how much easier it is to read the column with parallel construction.

### Lacking Parallel Construction

I enjoy sewing and to plan wardrobes  
It's important to make good grades as well as having fun.  
She expected a man to have a good job, to be good-looking, and who would pamper her every whim.  
His experience made him sullen, bitter, and a cynic.  
She asked him whether he could take shorthand and his experience.

### Having Parallel Construction

I enjoy sewing and planning wardrobes.  
It's important to make good grades as well as to have fun.  
She expected a man to have a good job, to be good-looking, and to pamper her every whim.  
His experience made him sullen, bitter, and cynical.  
She asked him whether he could take shorthand and what experience he had had.

By hard work and because I invested my savings in the company, I won a promotion.  
She wanted a house with seven rooms, a two-car garage, and it should be in a good location.

By hard work and by investing savings in the company, I won a promotion.  
She wanted a house with seven rooms, a two-car garage, and a good location.

Here are examples of thesis statements, which, of course, should always use parallel construction.

My summer job at a resort was worthwhile because it gave me money for college, I hadn't had a full-time job before, and I had time for recreation.  
A college student should not live at home because he needs to be independent, friendships in a dorm, and he wastes time commuting.

My summer job at a resort was worthwhile because it gave me money for college, experience in a full-time job, and time for recreation.  
A college student should not live at home because he needs to be independent, he will make more friends in a dorm, and he won't waste time commuting.

Consider the following:

She judged the painting for accuracy, for style, and for quality.  
They all felt that he had cheated, that he had lied, and that he had been let off lightly.

It would also be correct to write these sentences the following way, but they would lose emphasis.

She judged the paintings for accuracy, style, and quality.  
They all felt that he had cheated, lied, and been let off lightly.

Some groups of words demand a parallel construction:

not only . . .but also  
either . . .or  
neither . . .nor  
then . . .now

yesterday . . .today  
both . . .and  
whether . . .or  
on one hand . . .on the other hand

Exercise 1. Rewrite each of the following, using parallelism to accentuate the parallel ideas.

Example: We would break some windows, hopped a few trains.  
We had a few fights.

Rewrite: We broke a few windows, hopped a few trains, and had a few fights.

1. Tom enjoys swimming, and he likes to skate too.

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. He wore a green sued jacket, and his shirt was flowered. He was wearing platform shoes, multicolored.

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. At 16, I was full of wildness, outspoken, and I was an uncaring person.

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. The work was difficult and there was danger in it.

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Like many women, she had several roles: wife, mother, going to school, and job.

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. When the teacher left the room, I talked loudly, was fighting with my classmates, and would throw paper airplanes and even climbed on the desks.

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. When I disobeyed, my parents punished me: no going out, I couldn't talk on the telephone, and was not allowed to have company.

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Slowly, with ease, and soundless, the dancers moved offstage.

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. The drums pounded, did throb, were rising and falling.

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Good writing must be honest, have freshness, and precise words.

Rewrite: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Exercise 2. Below are the skeletons of sentences: fill in the blanks in each sentence with parallel words or phrases of your own. Take care that your sentences make sense and that your parallels are truly parallel.

1. It is much harder to \_\_\_\_\_ than to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. If you \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you will feel healthy.
3. The way we dress reveals our \_\_\_\_\_, our \_\_\_\_\_ and our \_\_\_\_\_.
4. At those parties, we had lots of fun. We \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ make me nervous.
6. It was a clear April day. In the park, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. My chief objectives in this course are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The mob was more interested in \_\_\_\_\_ than in \_\_\_\_\_.