

Grammar Worksheets: Parallelism, Including Correlative Conjunctions and Comparisons

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A sentence exhibits parallelism if similar ideas are expressed using the same syntactic and grammatical structure. Writers use parallel structures to communicate ideas that have the same importance using the same grammatical structure.

Parallelism is most common using gerund phrases (verb + ing) or infinitives (to + verb). Faulty parallelism occurs when writers do not use a parallel structure to communicate a series of ideas.

Faulty Parallelism: Without good pitching, the Marlins can be expected to lose more than eighty games, to draft early in next year's draft, and attendance will suffer greatly.

What are the ideas that seem to have the same importance?

1. The Marlins will lose more than eighty games
2. The Marlins will draft early in next year's draft.
3. The Marlins' attendance will suffer greatly.

Note that we have two infinitive phrases and one independent clause. A revision using parallel structure can be worded as follows:

Correct Parallelism: Without good pitching, the Marlins can be expected **to lose** more than eighty games, **to draft** early in next year's draft, and **to suffer** greatly in attendance.

The term parallelism also applies to using correlative conjunctions and comparisons properly.

Correlative Conjunctions: both, and; not, but; not only, but also; either, or; whether, or; neither, nor. These conjunctions connect words, phrases, and clauses that have the same level of meaning in the same sentence. Use the same grammatical structure with both elements of the correlative.

Faulty Parallelism: Andrew was both an industrious student, and he was also an excellent athlete.

Correct Parallelism: Andrew was both an industrious student and an excellent athlete.

Notice that since an (adjective + noun) pair is used with both elements, no comma is needed. If you use not only ... but also with independent clauses, you must separate the clauses with a comma, and you sometimes place the subject pronoun between the word but and the word also.

Example: Jessica not only excelled in mathematics, but she also astounded audiences with her musical talent.

Comparisons: Use a parallel structure when you connect two words, phrases, or clauses with a comparison word, including than or as.

Faulty Parallelism: Sharon's grade point average is much higher than her brother.

Correct Parallelism: Sharon's grade point average is much higher than her brother's (grade point average).

Correct Parallelism: Sharon has a higher grade point average than her brother (does).

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Please rewrite each sentence below, correcting each error in parallelism.

1. We debated between two options immigration had given us: going back to Nicaragua or to stay in the US with no hope of ever going back.

2. My uncle Julius likes bagels, lox, and eating chicken salad.

3. Bill not only runs five miles every day, he consumes eight thousand calories.

4. Jose's daughter will either attend Harvard, or she plans to go to the Standford.

5. The principal is excited about both the swim team earning national honors, and that the debate team won its first tournament.

6. Fatima's knowledge of accounting is greater than Farah.

7. Miranda's flowers are neither red, nor are they orange.

8. Stephen King's book reviews were as positive as Asimov.

9. The house sitter lost the keys, neglected the dogs, and she also trashed the kitchen.
