



Parallelism

Tips Sheet

- Parallelism is all about **balance**. Parallel structure shows that two or more items are of the same level of importance within a sentence. For a group of words or phrases to be parallel, they must have the same logical and grammatical structure. If these words/phrases do not follow the same pattern, the sentence becomes unbalanced and confusing for the reader.
- **Example:**
 - "We bought several items that would be essential on our camping trip: firewood, magazines, bug spray, and we got lots of food."
 - This is an example of **faulty parallelism**. As you can see, the items in the list following the colon do not have the same grammatical structure - "bug spray" is not balanced with "we got lots of food".
 - Here is the same sentence re-written with correct parallel structure: "We bought several items that would be essential on our camping trip: firewood, magazines, bug spray, and lots of food."
 - This revised sentence is parallel because every item is now listed in the same manner. The phrase that was previously used -- "we got lots of food" -- unnecessarily introduced a subject and verb not shared by the rest of the items in the list. By eliminating the subject and verb, simplifying the phrase to "lots of food," the last item on the list is now written in consistent fashion with the others.

Tips for Parallelism!

- **Highlighting:** Go through the sentence and highlight all of the verbs that are present in a list. Above each highlighted verb, write the tense of the verb (e.g. past, present, future, etc.). In a parallel sentence, each verb in a list should be consistent.
 - Example: The new chocolate factory would **save** money on shipping, **increase** nut production in the area and **will prove** its worthiness through its candy-coated business plan.
 - In this example, highlighting shows the first two verbs in the sentence to be in present tense, while the third is in future tense. "Will prove" thus needs to be changed to "prove" for the list to be parallel.



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- Stacking Method: To check for parallel structure, stack each part of a sentence's list on top of each other

- Example: "Mary likes hiking, swimming, and to ride a bicycle." Stacking the verbs should look like so:

Mary likes **hiking**,
 swimming,
 and **to ride** a bicycle.

Thanks to the visual aid that comes with stacking, it becomes more obvious that "to ride" (an infinitive verb form) is parallel to the other two verbs (which are both present tense).