# SENTENCE SKILLS

# WHAT IS PARALLELISM?

Parallelism is giving two or more parts of a sentence a similar form so as to give the passage a definite pattern and to give the ideas the same level of importance and a balance. Here is a visual of what parallelism looks like:

**Parallel elements:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Words** | **Infinitives** | **prepositional phrases** | **Subordinate clauses** |
| singing | to wonder | at the time | when I saw her |
| dancing | to investigate | under the table | after they called |

**Non-Parallel elements:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Words** | **Infinitives** | **prepositional phrases** | **Subordinate clauses** |
| to sing | since I wondered | at the time | to see her |
| dancing | to investigate | being nearby | after they called |

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

**Parallelism helps to…**

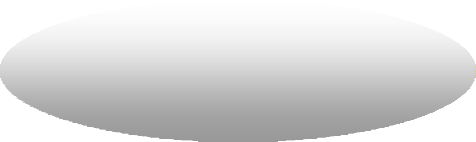
* + improve the fluidity of sentences.
  + process meaning more easily.
  + emphasize the likeness between two or more ideas.
  + create symmetry (balance) in writing
  + add force to writing.

# HOW DO I DO IT?

Here are some basic parallelism guidelines to apply in your writing:

1. Parallelism is used to balance nouns with nouns, prepositional phrases with prepositional phrases, participles with participles, infinitives with infinitives, clauses with clauses (***in*** the cup, ***on*** the desk).
2. Parallelism is used with elements joined by coordinating conjunctions (especially ***and, but,*** and ***or).***
3. Parallelism is used with elements in lists or in a series (***talked*** on the phone, ***ran*** 5 miles, ***saw*** friends)
4. Parallelism is used with elements being compared (**X** is *more than / better than* **Y**).
5. Parallelism is used with elements joined by a linking verb or a form of be (like ***being***, ***is, were***).
6. Parallelism is used with elements joined by linking words (**either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also).**

**Parallelism:**



**PRACTICE**

Using the different approaches to creating parallel structure, correct the faulty parallelism in the following sentences.

1. Parallelism is used to balance nouns with nouns, prepositional phrases with prepositional phrases, participles with participles, infinitives with infinitives, clauses with clauses (***in*** the cup, ***on*** the desk).

Example: We want a candidate who has a sense of commitment, a good record in public office, and experience in foreign affairs.

Fix: At the store my duties are1) keeping the shelves stocked, I 2) working with the registers, and 3) assisting customers.

1. Parallelism is used with elements joined by coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS especially ***and, but,*** and ***or).***

Example: She likes to look**, but** not to listen. He wondered who he was **and** what he was doing.

Fix: She is both happy about the raise and she is feeling nervous about the extra responsibility.

1. Parallelism is used with elements in lists or in a series (***talked*** on the phone, ***ran*** 5 miles, ***saw*** friends)

Example: He found cleaning supplies **in the closet**, **under the sink** but not **in the garage**.

Fix: Wizards tend to have the same personality traits: craftiness, being resourceful, they are rebellious, and they have a lot of determination.

1. Parallelism is used with elements being compared (**X** is *more than / better than* **Y**).

Example: **Driving** to New York can actually take less time than **flying** there.

Fix: Hearing her sing in person was ten times better than if you heard her on the radio.

1. Parallelism is used with elements joined by a linking verb or a form of be (like ***being***, ***is, were***).

Example: **Being** Jim’s friend means **being** understanding. To know her **is** to love her.

Fix: The passengers were preparing for departure while the flight attendants are going to try to get all the drinks served.

1. Parallelism is used with elements joined by linking words (**either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also).**

Example: As young recruits, we were told **not only** what to do **but also** what to think.

Fix: They not only ate all the food in the house but they also didn't clean up the mess.

|  |
| --- |
| **POSSIBLE ANSWERS FOR EXERCISES FROM PARALLELISM SECTION** |

1. At the store my duties are to keep the shelves stocked, **to work** ~~I work~~ the registers, and **to assist** ~~assisting~~ customers.
2. She is both happy about the raise and ~~she is feeling~~ nervous about the extra responsibility.
3. Wizards tend to have the same personality traits: craftiness, **resourcefulness** ~~being resourceful~~,

**rebelliousness** ~~they are rebellious~~, and ~~they have a lot of~~ determination.

1. Hearing her sing in person was ten times better than **hearing** ~~if you heard~~ her on the radio.
2. The passengers were preparing for departure while the flight attendants **were trying** ~~are going to try~~ to get all the drinks served.
3. They not only ate all the food in the house, but ~~they~~ also **left** ~~didn't clean up the~~ a mess.