What, Why, and How?

PARALLELISM

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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.

PARALLELISM

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

Using the different approaches to creating parallel structure fix 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 <u>sense of commitment</u>, a good <u>record</u> in public office, and <u>experience</u> in foreign affairs.

Fix: At the store my duties are to keep the shelves stocked, I work the registers, and assisting customers.

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

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

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

(3) 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.

(4) 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.

(5) 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. <u>To know</u> her **is** <u>to love</u> her.

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

(6) 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** <u>what to do</u> **but also** <u>what to think</u>.

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

(Pause)

PARALLELISM

ANSWERS

(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.

(4) Hearing her sing in person was ten times better than **hearing** ~~if you heard~~ her on the radio.

(5) The passengers were preparing for departure while the flight attendants **were trying** ~~are going to try~~ to get all the drinks served.

(6) They not only ate all the food in the house but ~~they~~ also **left** ~~didn't clean up the~~ a mess.

PARALLELISM

Using the different approaches to creating parallel structure, fix the faulty parallelism in the following paragraph:

Many college courses require students to write essays as part of the class curriculum. An academic essay for a college course should contain a thesis, body, and to conclude. It is important for students to perform some type of pre-writing or to cluster before typing is attempted on the computer. Pre-writing will usually help students to find and expand new ideas for the paper. After pre-writing, students should type a rough draft using their previous cluster. Students are always nervous in writing the rough draft and started the paper. It is better for students to write to the end of the rough draft than stopping every few sentences to check the grammar. If students do not expand their rough draft, the essay will not only be short but will be also disorganized. Revising the essay for a strong thesis, organization, and proper supporting is the most important part of the writing process. This is what separates the strong writers from the writers who are weaker. The final step in writing a college paper is editing. This is where students will check the paper for grammatical errors, proper punctuating, and spelling errors. A strong writing process will allow students to write a proper college essay. (Pause)

PARALLELISM

ANSWERS

Possible revisions to the paragraph:

Many college courses require students to write essays as part of the class curriculum. An academic essay for a college course should contain a thesis, body, and **conclusion** ~~to conclude~~. It is important for students to perform some type of pre-writing or **clustering** ~~to cluster~~ before **they start typing** ~~typing is attempted~~ on the computer. Pre-writing will usually help students ~~to~~ find and expand new ideas for the paper. After pre-writing, students should type a rough draft using their previous cluster. Students are always nervous in writing the rough draft and **starting** ~~started~~ the paper. It is better for students to write to the end of the rough draft than **to stop** ~~stopping~~ every few sentences to check the grammar. If students do not expand their rough draft, the essay will not only be short but ~~will be~~ also disorganized. Revising the essay for a strong thesis, organization, and proper **support** ~~supporting~~ is the most important part of the writing process. This is what separates the strong writers from **the weak writers** ~~writers who are weaker~~. The final step in writing a college paper is editing. This is where students will check the paper for grammatical errors, proper **punctuation** ~~punctuating~~, and spelling errors. A strong writing process will allow students to write a proper college essay.

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