



Parallel Structure

Writing in parallel structure requires you to match the grammatical form of words, phrases, or clauses within a sentence. Parallel structure lends grace to writing, highlights particular ideas, and makes your writing easier to understand.

Make **words** parallel within a sentence:

Incorrect: Fruits, fresh vegetables, and whole grain products are part of a healthy diet. [Adjectives modify some nouns but not others.]

Correct: Fruits, vegetables, and grains are part of a healthy diet.

Make **phrases** parallel within a sentence:

Incorrect: During class last night, Dan and Sam debated how literature should be defined and the use of theory. [Structure and word order differ in each phrase.]

Correct: During class last night, Dan and Sam debated the definition of literature and the use of theory.

Make **clauses** parallel within a sentence:

Incorrect: While driving across the country, Mary was planning on camping in the Grand Canyon, wanted to stay with a friend in San Diego, and swim in the Pacific Ocean. [Verb forms differ in each clause.]

Correct: While driving across the country, Mary planned to camp in the Grand Canyon, hike in the Rocky Mountains, and swim in the Pacific Ocean.

Be sure to maintain parallel structure in the following situations:

- When using conjunctions (and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so)
- When using correlative conjunctions (not only...but also, either...or, both...and)
- When using *than* and *as*
- When using function words (articles, infinitives, prepositions)