PARALLELISM IN WRITING

Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. This can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. The usual way to join parallel structures is with the use of coordinating [conjunctions](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/598/01/) (FANBOYS=for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

#### Words and Phrases

**With the**[**-ing form (gerund)**](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/627/01/)**of words:**

* **Parallel:** Mary likes hik**ing**, swimm**ing**, and bicycl**ing**.

1. **With infinitive phrases:**

* **Parallel:** Mary likes **to hike**, **to swim**, and **to ride** a bicycle. OR Mary likes to **hike**, **swim**, and **ride** a bicycle.

(Note: You can use "to" before all the verbs in a sentence or only before the first one.)

#### Do not mix forms.

**Example 1**

* **Not Parallel:** Mary likes hik**ing**, swimm**ing**, and **to ride** a bicycle.
* **Parallel:**  Mary likes hik**ing**, swimm**ing**, and rid**ing** a bicycle.

**Example 2**

* **Not Parallel:**  The manager was asked to write his report quick**ly**, accurate**ly**, and **in a detailed manner**.
* **Parallel:**  The manager was asked to write his report quick**ly**, accurate**ly**, and thorough**ly**.

**Example 3**

* **Not Parallel:**  The teacher said that he was a poor student because he wait**ed** until the last minute to study for the exam, complet**ed** his lab problems in a careless manner, and **his motivation was** low.
* **Parallel:**  The teacher said that he was a poor student because he wait**ed** until the last minute to study for the exam, complet**ed** his lab problems in a careless manner, and lack**ed** motivation.

#### Clauses

A parallel structure that begins with clauses must keep on with clauses. Changing to another pattern or changing the voice of the verb (from active to passive or vice versa) will break the parallelism.

**Example 1**

* **Not Parallel:**  The coach told the players **that they should get** a lot of sleep, **that they should not eat** too much, and **to do** some warm-up exercises before the game.
* **Parallel:**  The coach told the players **that they should get** a lot of sleep, **that they should not eat** too much, and **that they should do** some warm-up exercises before the game.
* **Parallel:**  The coach told the players that they should **get** a lot of sleep, not **eat** too much, and **do** some warm-up exercises before the game.

**Example 2**

* **Not Parallel:**  The salesman expected **that he would present** his product at the meeting, **that there would be** time for him to show his slide presentation, and **that questions would be asked** by prospective buyers. **(passive)**
* **Parallel:**  The salesman expected **that he would present** his product at the meeting, **that there would be** time for him to show his slide presentation, and **that prospective buyers would ask** him questions.

#### Lists After a Colon

**Be sure to keep all the elements in a list in the same form.**

**Example 1**

* **Not Parallel:**  The dictionary can be used to find these: **word meanings**, **pronunciations**, **correct spellings**, and **looking up irregular verbs**.
* **Parallel:**  The dictionary can be used to find these: **word meanings**, **pronunciations**, **correct spellings**, and **irregular verbs**.