



Parallel Structure in Writing

What Is Parallel Structure?

Parallel structure (also called parallelism) means using the same grammatical form for items that appear in a list, comparison, or paired idea.

Parallel structure helps writing sound:

- Clear
- Balanced
- Professional
- Easy to read

Why Does Parallel Structure Matter?

Strong academic writing depends on clarity. When sentences are not parallel, readers may:

- Get confused about meaning
- Have to reread sentences
- Lose confidence in the writer's control of language

Parallel structure is especially important in:

- Essays and research papers
- Thesis statements
- Topic sentences
- Resumes and cover letters

Common Places Where Parallel Structure Is Needed

1. **Lists** - When listing items, make sure they follow the same grammatical pattern.

Not Parallel: The course requires reading the textbook, writing essays, and quizzes.

Parallel: The course requires reading the textbook, writing essays, and taking quizzes.

2. **Items Joined by Coordinating Conjunctions** (and, or, but)

Not Parallel: She enjoys reading novels and to watch movies.

Parallel: She enjoys reading novels and watching movies.

3. **Comparisons** - Words like than, as, or like often signal a need for parallel structure.

Not Parallel: Studying in the library is better than when you study at home.

Parallel: in the library is better than studying at home.

4. **Paired Ideas** - Look for pairs like not only...but also, either...or, both...and.

Not Parallel: The class was both challenging and it was rewarding.

Parallel: The class was both challenging and rewarding.

Common Types of Parallel Structures

1. **-ing (Gerund) Forms** - writing, reading, analyzing

Parallel: The assignment involves reading articles, analyzing evidence, and writing an essay.

2. Infinitive Forms - to write, to read, to analyze

Parallel: The goal is to understand the text, to develop an argument, and to revise clearly.

3. Noun Phrases

Parallel: The job requires attention to detail, punctuality, and strong communication skills.

How to Check for Parallel Structure

Ask yourself:

1. Am I listing or pairing ideas?
2. Do the items have the same grammatical form?
3. Can I underline each item and see if they match?

Quick Practice

Fix the parallel structure in each sentence:

1. The student is responsible for taking notes, participation in class, and to submit assignments.
2. She prefers studying alone rather than when groups study.
3. The professor emphasized critical thinking, writing clearly, and clarity in arguments.

Possible Revisions:

1. taking notes, participating in class, and submitting assignments
2. studying alone rather than studying in groups
3. critical thinking, clear writing, and strong arguments

Key Takeaway

Parallel structure:

- Improves clarity
- Strengthens academic tone
- Makes your writing more persuasive

If a sentence sounds awkward, check for parallelism first.

Writing Center Tip

When revising, read your sentences out loud. If part of a sentence sounds “off,” it may not be parallel.

Parallel Structure Worksheet: Practice for College Writers

Name: _____

Date: _____

Part I: Identifying Parallel Structure

Directions:

Read each sentence. Circle the word or phrase that breaks parallel structure.

1. The class focuses on reading challenging texts, writing analytical essays, and discussion.
2. Students are expected to attend class regularly, participate actively, and that they submit assignments on time.
3. The tutoring session helped me understand my thesis, revising my paragraphs, and to proofread my essay.
4. Online learning requires self-discipline, managing time well, and students must stay motivated.

Part II: Revising for Parallel Structure

Directions:

Rewrite each sentence so that all items follow the same grammatical form.

1. The professor emphasized clear arguments, using evidence, and clarity in writing.
2. I enjoy studying at the library, working with tutors, and when I meet with classmates.
3. The assignment requires students to read the article, summarizing the author's argument, and to respond critically.
4. Success in college depends on time management, staying organized, and how motivated you are.

Part III: Parallel Structure with Paired Conjunctions

Directions:

Correct the parallel structure in each sentence.

1. The course is not only demanding but also it is rewarding.
2. Students may either submit the essay online or handing in a printed copy.
3. Academic success requires both discipline and you must be consistent.

Part IV: Multiple-Choice Check

Directions:

Circle the sentence that is correctly parallel.

1.
 - A. College writing involves planning essays, drafting paragraphs, and revision.
 - B. College writing involves planning essays, drafting paragraphs, and to revise.
2.
 - A. She prefers studying alone rather than group work.
 - B. She prefers studying alone rather than working in groups.
3.
 - A. The workshop focused on grammar, organization, and how to revise.
 - B. The workshop focused on grammar, organization, and revision.

Part V: Editing Your Own Writing

Directions:

Choose one sentence from your own essay, discussion post, or assignment that includes a list or comparison. Rewrite it to improve parallel structure.

Original sentence:

Revised sentence:

Reflection (Optional)

Directions:

Answer in 1–2 sentences.

How does using parallel structure make writing clearer for a reader?