

CHAPTER 26

Parallelism

PART A Defining and Writing Parallels

PART B Using Parallelism for
Special Writing Effects

PART A

Defining and Writing Parallels

Which sentence in each pair sounds better to you?

- (1) Jennie is an artist, spends time at athletics, and flies planes.
- (2) Jennie is *an artist, an athlete, and a pilot*.
- (3) He slowed down and came sliding. The winning run was scored.
- (4) He *slowed down, slid, and scored* the winning run.

- Do sentences (2) and (4) sound smoother and clearer than sentences (1) and (3)?
- Sentences (2) and (4) balance similar words or phrases to show similar ideas.

This technique is called *parallelism* or *parallel structure*. The italicized parts of (2) and (4) are *parallel*. When you use **parallelism**, you repeat similar grammatical structures in order to express similar ideas.

- In sentence (2), can you see how *an artist, an athlete, and a pilot* are parallel? All three words in the series are singular nouns.
- In sentence (4), can you see how *slowed, slid, and scored* are parallel? All three words in the series are verbs in the past tense.

Now let's look at two more pairs of sentences. Note which sentence in each pair contains parallelism.

- (5) The car was big, had beauty, and it cost a lot.
 (6) The car was *big, beautiful, and expensive*.
 (7) They raced across the roof, and the fire escape is where they came down.
 (8) They raced *across the roof and down the fire escape*.

■ In sentence (6), how are *big, beautiful, and expensive* parallel words?

■ In sentence (8), how are *across the roof and down the fire escape* parallel phrases?

Certain special constructions require parallel structure:

- (9) The room is *both light and cheery*.
 (10) You *either love geometry or hate it*.
 (11) Tanya *not only plays the guitar but also sings*.
 (12) Richard would *rather fight than quit*.

Each of these constructions has two parts:

both . . . and	not only . . . but also
(n)either . . . (n)or	rather . . . than . . .

The words, phrases, or clauses following each part must be parallel:

light . . . cheery	plays . . . sings
love . . . hate	fight . . . quit

Parallelism is an excellent way to add smoothness and power to your writing. Use it in pairs or series of ideas, balancing a noun with a noun, an *-ing* verb with an *-ing* verb, a prepositional phrase with a prepositional phrase.

PRACTICE 1

Circle the element that is *not* parallel in each list.

EXAMPLE: blue

red

colored like rust

purple

1. broiling

frying

baker

cooking

2. under the porch

in the attic

the basement stairs

behind the back door

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>3. painting the kitchen
cans of paint
several brushes
one roller</p> <p>4. goodness
strength
love
wise</p> <p>5. standing on tiptoes
toward the audience
smiling with anticipation
leaning against the table</p> | <p>6. music shops
clothing stores
buying a birthday present
gift boutiques</p> <p>7. topped with whipped cream
bananas and ice cream
sprinkled with pecans
covered with chocolate sauce</p> <p>8. We shop for fruits at the market.
We buy enough to last all week.
We are baking a cake tonight.
We cook special meals often.</p> |
|---|--|

PRACTICE 2

Rewrite each sentence, using parallelism to accent the similar ideas.

EXAMPLE: How can you recognize and you can be helpful to someone who is on drugs?

Rewrite: How can you recognize and help someone who is on drugs?

1. A person on drugs may become unusually nervous, irritable, or there may be anger.

Rewrite: _____

2. He or she might neglect chores, be forgetting dates, and the person might skip work or classes also.

Rewrite: _____

3. New friends may appear whose names and where they are living are kept secret.

Rewrite: _____

4. Other signs include reckless driving. Health may become poor, and sloppy physical appearance is also a sign.

Rewrite: _____

5. Heavy drug users may experience deep depression and are having wild hallucinations.

Rewrite: _____

6. Many drug users will deny their problem rather than admitting to having it.

Rewrite: _____

7. However, wisely and thoughtful friends and relatives can try to help.

Rewrite: _____

8. They can approach the person with compassion rather than accusingly.

Rewrite: _____

9. They might not only express their concern but also be making suggestions about treatment programs.

Rewrite: _____

10. Groups that use the twelve-step method or when the program uses the "tough love" approach have the most successful programs.

Rewrite: _____
