

## A Teacher's Guide to Faulty Parallelism

### What is faulty parallelism?

Faulty parallelism refers to unbalanced words, phrases or clauses. When two elements of a sentence are similar, you should express them in parallel, or matching, form. Faulty parallelism occurs when ideas of equal weight fail to be expressed in grammatical forms of equal weight. This imbalance causes the writing to sound clumsy and distracts the reader.

### How can I find and fix faulty parallelism?

The best way to recognize faulty parallelism and what needs to be done to fix it is to read what is written out loud. You could also have your students convert all items listed in the grammatical form into a different form to help them better visualize how to balance the ideas in their writing.

*There are five main situations where faulty parallelism might show up.*

#### 1. Co-ordinating Conjunctions (and, or, but, for, so, yet, nor)

Jane Eyre wants financial independence and to find love.  
(Jane Eyre wants financial independence and love.)

I outlined the letters slowly and with care.  
(I outlined the letters slowly and carefully.)

#### 2. Correlative Conjunctions (“either... or”, “not only... but also”, “both... and”, “whether... or”)

The doors in the cottage were not only too narrow but also were too short.  
(The doors in the cottage were not only too narrow but also too short.)

Not only will it hurt them nutritionally, but they can damage their chance at having children.

(Not only will it hurt them nutritionally, but also can damage their chance at having children.)

### **3. Words in a series**

Shakespeare wrote comedies, tragedies, romances and the plays based on historical figures.

(Shakespeare wrote comedies, tragedies, romances and historical plays.)

Countless newspaper articles and news footage were about car wrecks, injuries and sometimes deaths.

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### **4. Comparisons and contrasts using than or as**

Joan does not like Chuck as much as she seems to like Luke.

(Joan does not like Chuck as much as she likes Luke.)

In *To Kill A Mockingbird*, we emphasize more with Tom Robinson than the Ewels.

(In *To Kill A Mockingbird*, we emphasize more with Tom Robinson than with the Ewels.)

### **5. Function words (Prepositions, articles, the infinitive, introductory words.)**

*A function word that begins one clause must begin the others.*

My friends attend school because they like to make new friends, they want to play new sports or because they love to learn new things.

(My friends attend school because they like to make new friends, they want to play new sports or they love to learn new things.)

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