

FAULTY PARALLELISM!?!?

(Don't worry it's not that scary!)

What is faulty parallelism????????????? Well, you are about to find out!

- Faulty parallelism distracts the reader and disturbs the flow of the writing. When two elements of a sentence are similar in meaning, you should express them in parallel form. In other words, all linked words should match in form.
- Parallel structure is also a matter of balance. Balancing a sentence can be compared to balancing a scale if we pretend that certain words -- and, or, but -- are the balancing points and if we understand that the words being balanced must carry the same "weight" in the sentence. One part of speech or of a sentence can be balanced only by one (or a series) of the same kind.

Example:

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

Shakespeare wrote comedies, tragedies, romances, and history plays. **CORRECT!!!**

Look for comparisons and lists. Make sure all of the linked items are in the same form. For example, they should all be nouns, they should all begin with matching articles, or they should all be verbs.

Example:

I enjoy **biking** and **to walk** down by the pier.

I enjoy **biking** and **walking** down by the pier.

This example sentence is unbalanced because "and" divides two different parts of speech. An "ing" word is used before and, while an infinitive, "to walk," is used after. To make the sentence parallel, simply use the same part of speech for both ideas.

Example:

Boy Scouts at the camp can learn **cooking, canoeing, swimming, or how to make ropes.**

Boy Scouts at the camp can learn **cooking, canoeing, swimming, or rope-making.**

Here again, the form of the last item, "how to make ropes," doesn't match the other items and seems too heavy. To balance the sentence, change the form to match as in the parallel example.

Example:

Non-traditional students **often study long hours, get limited sleep, and up again with the sunrise.**

Non-traditional students often **study long hours, get limited sleep, and are up again with the sunrise.**

This time the sentence is unbalanced because the first two phrases include verbs, "study" and "get," but the last phrase doesn't contain a verb. To be parallel, each phrase should follow the pattern of the first one in the series. This can be accomplished by adding a verb to the last phrase.

Parallelism using common connectors:

A slightly different parallelism involves the common connectors-- either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also. Here, the kind of word or part of a sentence that follows the first connector must be the same as the kind following the second. Consider the following examples.

The hurricane not only **destroyed the fishing fleet** but also **the homes of the fishermen.**

The hurricane **destroyed** not only **the fishing fleet** but also **the homes of the fishermen.**

In this case, the verb "destroyed" cannot balance the noun "homes." The sentence should be rewritten so that "destroyed" appears before "not only" and so *nouns* follow both connectors.

QUIZ!!!!

Rewrite the following sentences to correct the faulty parallelism

1. Penelope's goals were a successful career, making a lot of money, and to marry the man she loved.

2. His work was a mess, all mixed up, and it wasn't well planned.

3. When he left his home town, he was lonely, a recluse, and nobody liked him.

1. Penelope's goals were a successful career, making a lot of money, and to marry the man she loved. (The coordinate ideas in this sentence are expressed as a noun, [a participial phrase, and an infinitive phrase](#).)

There is more than one way to correct the sentence. For example, we could make the key words in the coordinate ideas all nouns.

Penelope's goals were a successful career, a good salary, and a marriage based on love.

Another way to correct the problem with parallelism is to make all the key terms infinitive phrases.

Penelope's goals were to have a successful career, to make a lot of money, and to marry the man she loved.

2. His work was a mess, all mixed up, and it wasn't well planned. (The coordinate ideas in this sentence are expressed as a noun, an adjective, and a clause. We're going to make them all adjectives.)

His work was messy, confused, and poorly planned.

3. When he left his home town, he was lonely, a recluse, and nobody liked him. (The coordinate ideas in this sentence are in the form of an adjective, a noun, and a clause. We're going to make them all adjectives.)

When he left his home town, he was lonely, reclusive, and unliked.