

# Faulty Parallelism

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](#) such as "and" or "or."

The following examples illustrate faulty and correct parallelism. In each of the examples of faulty parallelism, one of the elements doesn't follow the form of the other parts of speech:

Faulty: I enjoy hiking, biking, and to go to movies.

Correct: I enjoy hiking, biking, and going to movies.

Faulty: Voters admire politicians with integrity and who act honestly.

Correct: Voters admire politicians who have integrity and who act honestly.

Faulty: The ideal student is attentive, studious, and asks questions.

Correct: The ideal student is attentive, studious, and inquisitive.

## Words and Phrases

With the [-ing form \(gerund\)](#) of words:

Parallel: Mary likes hiking, swimming, and bicycling.

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.)

## 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.

-- or --

**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 for these purposes: to find *word meanings*, *pronunciations*, *correct spellings*, and *looking up irregular verbs*.

**Parallel:** The dictionary can be used for these purposes: to find *word meanings*, *pronunciations*, *correct spellings*, and *irregular verbs*.

**Exercise:** Rewrite the following sentences to correct any faulty parallelism.

1. The shape of the rock, how big it was, and its color reminded me of a small elephant.
2. Chia, my dog, is overweight and moves clumsily.
3. Your job consists of arranging the books, cataloguing new arrivals, and the pamphlets have to be alphabetized.
4. A thin film of frost coated the trees. The hedges and shrubs had it also.

5. He is an affectionate husband, a thoughtful son, and kind to his kids.