



Parallel Constructions

Parallel Construction 3

Parallelism in writing refers to the use of equal grammatical forms or matching sentence structures formulated to express similar ideas. Humans like symmetry in art, music, and language. Therefore, it is not surprising that symmetry in our writing is important in the building of intelligent written structures. It is necessary that we apply similar grammatical form or structure to related ideas when we make a list or a comparison. Listed below are some examples of grouping ideas to match in lists and comparisons.

Parallelism in Lists

Examples:

- Incorrect: Susan likes **to swim** in the ocean, **biking** in town, and a **hike** in the mountains.

In this sentence, three actions are being listed. They are grouped and linked together by some kind of relationship (in this case, as equal parts of a list). In order to emphasize that they are a related group, they should have the same grammatical form, as follows:

Correct: Susan likes **to swim** in the ocean, **to bike** in town, and **to hike** in the mountains.

~ or, you can choose not to repeat the word *to*, and do as follows:

Correct: Susan likes **to swim** in the ocean, **bike** in town, and **hike** in the mountains.

The phrases in the correct sentence are parallel because the verb beginning each phrase is in the same infinitive form: <to + verb>

- Incorrect: The professor explained **how to organize** and **about documenting**.

Correct: The professor explained **how to organize** a paper and **how to document** sources.

The phrases in the correct sentence are parallel because they both start with "how to" and the verbs are in the same form.

Parallelism in Comparisons

Examples:

- Incorrect: When writing a paper, **research** is usually more time consuming than **documenting sources**.

This sentence is incorrect because the two items being compared are in different grammatical forms; one is a noun in the regular form, and the other is a gerund (a gerund is a word that ends in *-ing*, like the verb form, but is used as a noun). To show that they are a pair connected in a relationship of some kind (in this case, a comparison), either put both in the regular noun form, as follows:

Correct: When writing a paper, **research** is usually more time consuming than **documentation**.

~ or, use gerunds for both items:

Correct: When writing a paper, **researching** is usually more time consuming than **documenting sources**.

The phrases in the first correct sentence are parallel because they are both nouns, while the phrases in the sentence that follows are both gerunds.

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