

Parallelism

Note: This document should only be used as a reference and should not replace assignment guidelines.

Parallelism elevates your writing by demonstrating grammatical consistency. It occurs when all items in a list are in the same grammatical form.

Parallel Lists

When a list is parallel, all words, phrases, or clauses take the same form.

EXAMPLE: I am **tired** and **hungry**. (words)
Please write **a long essay**, **a short story**, and **an epic poem**. (phrases)
Jason went home because **he wanted to save money**, **he missed his family**, and **he was tired of his roommates**. (clauses)

Faulty Parallelism

Faulty parallelism occurs when unequal structures are used to express equal ideas.

UNPARALLEL: Sarah does not like **hot milk** or **water that is cold**.
PARALLEL: Sarah does not like **hot milk** or **cold water**.
UNPARALLEL: Bryan loves **playing baseball**, **reading poetry**, and **to study history**.
PARALLEL: Bryan loves **playing baseball**, **reading poetry**, and **studying history**.

How to Fix Faulty Parallelism.

1. Identify the word or group of words that the conjunction (*and*, *or*, etc.) joins.

EXAMPLE: There were **three red cars**, **two blue trucks**, and **four bicycles that were green**.

2. Examine each of the words, phrases, or clauses to see if they are parallel by labeling each word with *adjective*, *noun*, *verb*, *phrase*, etc.

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| three (<i>adjective</i>) | red (<i>adjective</i>) | cars (<i>noun</i>) |
| two (<i>adjective</i>) | blue (<i>adjective</i>) | trucks (<i>noun</i>) |
| four (<i>adjective</i>) | bicycles (<i>noun</i>) | that were green (<i>modifying phrase</i>) |

The first two word groups are parallel; however, the last one is not because it does not have the same grammatical pattern.

3. Fix the word group that is not parallel.

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| BEFORE: four (<i>adjective</i>) | bicycles (<i>noun</i>) | that were green (<i>modifying phrase</i>) |
| AFTER: four (<i>adjective</i>) | green (<i>adjective</i>) | bicycles (<i>noun</i>) |

4. Rewrite the sentence: There were **three red cars**, **two blue trucks**, and **four green bicycles**.

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