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 (adjective)   red (adjective)   cars (noun)
two (adjective)    blue (adjective)   trucks (noun)
four (adjective)   bicycles (noun)    that were green (modifying phrase)

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 (adjective)   bicycles (noun)    that were green (modifying phrase)
AFTER: four (adjective)   green (adjective)   bicycles (noun)

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