

# Parallelism

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

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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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