

## What Is Parallelism?

Parallelism is the usage of similar grammatical construction to express similar content and function. This enables the reader to recognize the similarity or comparison made between the items. All items, phrases, or clauses used in a sentence should be parallel.

### Example 1

**Incorrect:** The doctor recommended a daily intake of 5 mg antibiotic, changing the diet plan, and exercising.

**Correct:** The doctor recommended a daily intake of 5 mg antibiotic, a change in diet, and regular exercise.

### Example 2

**Incorrect:** The eruption was slow, continued sporadically, and ended in a catastrophe.

**Correct:** The eruption began slowly, continued sporadically, and ended catastrophically.

### How Is Parallelism Useful?

Parallel structure is especially useful for making detailed descriptions and comparisons more readable. For example, if the different minerals in a rock are always described with their features (such as modal abundance, grain size, and habit) in the same order, then readers can assimilate the information more easily. It may be helpful to construct successive paragraphs in parallel, especially when discussing results in a paper.

### Types of Parallel Constructions

1. An article or a preposition applying to all the members of a series must either be used only before the first term or else be repeated before each term.

#### Example 1

**Incorrect:** We analyzed the French, the Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese populations.

**Correct:** We analyzed the French, the Italian, the Spanish, and the Portuguese populations.

**Also Correct:** We analyzed the French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese populations.

#### Example 2

**Incorrect:** One can visit Tokyo in spring, summer, or in winter.

**Correct:** One can visit Tokyo in spring, summer, or winter.

**Also Correct:** One can visit Tokyo in spring, in summer, or in winter.

2. Correlative expressions (both, and; not, but; not only, but also; either, or; first, second, third; and the like) should be followed by the same grammatical construction. Many violations of this rule can be corrected by rearranging the sentence.

#### Example 1

**Incorrect:** It was **both a** long ceremony and tedious.

**Correct:** The ceremony was **both** long and tedious.

#### Example 2

**Incorrect:** A time **not for** words, **but** action.

**Correct:** A time **not for** words, **but for** action.

#### Example 3

**Incorrect:** **Either you must** grant his request **or** incur his ill will.

**Correct:** **You must either** grant his request **or** incur his ill will.

#### Example 4

**Incorrect:** My objections are, first, the injustice of the measure; second, **that** it is unconstitutional.

**Correct:** My objections are, first, **that** the measure is unjust; second, **that** it is unconstitutional.

3. When making comparisons, the things you compare should be couched in parallel structures whenever that is possible and appropriate.

**Incorrect:** Our model is more predictable than **Scott**.

**Correct:** Our model is more predictable than **Scott's**.

4. With compound subjects, the individual subjects should have the same form.

**Incorrect:** **Augite in large phenocrysts** and **small grains of olivine** are common in the lava.

**Correct:** **Large augite phenocrysts** and **small olivine grains** are common in the lava.

5. With compound predicates, be sure the verbs are correct and in the same tense throughout.

**Incorrect:** Magma **erupted on** Friday and **continued on** Saturday.

**Incorrect:** Magma **erupted on** Friday and **continued to erupt** on Saturday.

**Correct:** Magma **eruptions began on** Friday and **continued on** Saturday.