

## Parallel Structure

**Parallelism**, or **parallel structure**, refers to the repetition of similar grammatical patterns within a sentence. Nouns must match with nouns, verbs with verbs, adjectives with adjectives, and so on. Balancing the grammatical structures in clauses, phrases, or elements in a list improves the flow of your writing, making your sentences clearer and easier for the reader to understand.

Here's an example of a sentence that is **not** parallel:

Patricia enjoys reading, to go swimming, and she plays soccer.

Oftentimes, you can tell if a sentence contains parallel structure by breaking it into several smaller sentences and examining whether or not these new sentences follow the same grammatical pattern:

Patricia enjoys reading.

Patricia enjoys to go swimming.

Patricia enjoys she plays soccer.

In order for this sentence to be parallel, each of the verbs should follow the same *-ing* (or gerund) format:

Patricia enjoys reading, swimming, and playing soccer.

Consider the following examples of non-parallel and parallel sentences. Which sentences do you think flow better?

**Not Parallel:** Sean's mother told him to clean his room, the laundry needed to be folded, and to feed the cat.

**Parallel:** Sean's mother told him to clean his room, fold the laundry, and feed the cat.

**Not Parallel:** The new café downtown has delicious food, great music, and the coffee is always fresh.

**Parallel:** The new café downtown has delicious food, great music, and fresh coffee.

**Not Parallel:** Do you prefer to exercise at the gym or jogging outside?

**Parallel:** Do you prefer to exercise at the gym or to jog outside?

**Not Parallel:** Every morning, Sandeep eats eggs and toast, goes for a run, and reading the newspaper.

**Parallel:** Every morning, Sandeep eats eggs and toast, goes for a run, and reads the newspaper.

**Not Parallel:** Céline thought that she would have time to grab a quick lunch, catch a movie at the multiplex, and household chores would be finished before her doctor's appointment at 4:30pm.

**Parallel:** Céline thought that she would have time to grab a quick lunch, to catch a movie at the multiplex, and to finish household chores before her doctor's appointment at 4:30pm.

**Not Parallel:** They were unsure whether they wanted to go surfing in Hawaii, parasailing in Florida, or scuba dive off the coast of California.

**Parallel:** They were unsure whether they wanted to go surfing in Hawaii, parasailing in Florida, or scuba diving off the coast of California.

**Not Parallel:** Omar's advisor told him he had two options: rewrite the third chapter of his thesis or scrapping the whole section altogether.

**Parallel:** Omar's advisor told him he had two options: rewrite the third chapter of his thesis or scrap the whole section altogether.

**Not Parallel:** He was depressed, irritable, and wanted to sleep.

**Parallel:** He was depressed, irritable, and tired.

**Not Parallel:** In art class, Min made a watercolor painting, a paper doll, and sculpted a mug out of clay.

**Parallel:** In art class, Min made a watercolor painting, a paper doll, and a clay mug.