

Parallelism

Parallelism involves the use of an identical grammatical pattern when making a list. For example, if the first item in a list is a noun, the items following it should be nouns as well. If an infinitive verb phrase (*to + verb*) is used first in a list, the remaining items should also be infinitive verb phrases. If you start a list with a dependent clause, the remaining items in a list should also be dependent clauses. If you start a list with a plural form you should continue with a plural form, and so on. In other words, the items you are comparing or contrasting in a list should follow a grammatical pattern.

The best way to join items in a list is to use coordinator words (*for/and/but/or/yet/so*) and correlative conjunctions (*both/and, whether/or, either/or, neither/nor, not/but, not only/but also*).

Coordinators – And, Or, But, Yet, So

The following parallel structures are joined by coordinators *and*, *but* and *or*. Notice the following singular/plural parallel pairs:

- Federation University monitors tertiary student attendance **and** Federation Training monitors trade student attendance (*singular form with **and***).
- Federation University monitors student failure rates **and** responses to staff evaluation surveys (*plural form with **and***).
- Federation University requires regular tutorial attendance **but** not lecture attendance (*singular form with **but***).
- Federation University requires regular attendance at lectures, **but** not at extra-mural events (*plural form with **but***).
- Poisons should be withdrawn from sale if they result in land, sea or air pollution (*singular form with **or***).
- Poisons should be withdrawn from sale if they have an adverse effect on humans, animals or environmentally sensitive areas (*plural form with **or***).

Note the following use with the infinitive verb form:

- A university education should lead to increased employment, **and** to improved job-readiness (*infinitive verb with **and***).
- A university education should lead to employment, **but** not necessarily to wealth (*infinitive verb with **but***).

Correlative Conjunctions

These are placed directly *before* the elements they join in the sentence. Examples: *both ... and*, *either... or*, *neither ... nor*, and *not only ... but also*. Note the following parallel pairs:

- A degree provides a way to **both** get a good job **and** to improve your wealth (*singular form with **both ...and***).
- A degree provides a way for **both** getting jobs **and** improving finances (*plural *ing form with **both ... and***).
- Damage to the environment can come **either** from a toxin **or** from pollution (*singular form with **either ... or***).
- Damage to the environment can come **either** from natural toxins **or** from human causes such as pollution and automobiles (*plural form with **either ... or***).
- Governments are **neither** concerned about human caused pollution **nor** worried about its future impact (*singular form with **neither ... nor***).
- If **neither** companies **nor** governments try to reduce pollution then the earth will be worse for future generations (*plural form with **neither ... nor***).
- Governments are **not only** concerned about pollution **but also** concerned about cyber warfare (*singular form with **not only ... but also***).
- Governments are **not only** concerned about naturally occurring toxins **but also** worried about increasing cyber warfare attacks (*plural *ing form with **not only ... but also***).

Exercises

A. Rewrite the following sentences in parallel form. Underline the part of the sentence that is not parallel and correct it.

Example: A university education can bring stress, isolation from your family, and many hardships.

Rewrite: A university education can bring stress, isolation and hardship.

- Being a student can be lonely, but it can also bring you happiness.
- Learning how to drive can be exciting and bring rewards.
- Owning a home can bring about contentment and being independent.
- The new movies have arrived: they are neither illuminating nor make you amused.
- The organization promotes sustainable landscaping practices, green building-construction methods and products, and minimizing pesticide use in the home.

B. Write seven original sentences in parallel form, using the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or*, and *but* and the correlative conjunctions *both ... and*, *either ... or*, *neither ...nor*, and *not only ... but also*.

Answers:

- Being a student can both bring happiness and loneliness.*
- Learning how to drive can both be exciting and rewarding.*
- Owning a home can bring contentment and independence.*
- The new movies have arrived: they are neither illuminating nor amusing.*
- The organization promotes sustainable landscaping practices, green building-construction methods and products, and minimal use of pesticides.*

