



Make Sentences Sound Clear (Parallel Structure)

What Is Parallel Structure?

Parallel structure means using the same grammatical pattern when listing ideas or connecting parts of a sentence. When words, phrases, or clauses are parallel, they follow the same form.

Parallel structure makes your writing smoother, clearer, and easier to read.

Why Is Parallel Structure Important?

Parallel structure:

- improves clarity
- makes sentences easier to understand
- creates a consistent, professional style

Without parallel structure, writing can feel confusing or uneven.

Parallel Structure in Lists

Items in a list should follow the same grammatical form.

Incorrect: Students need to study, good time management, and to attend class.

Correct: Students need to study, manage their time, and attend class.

Parallel Structure with Verbs

When using multiple verbs in a sentence, keep them in the same form.

Incorrect: Students read the chapter, taking notes, and they discuss ideas.

Correct: Students read the chapter, take notes, and discuss ideas.

Parallel Structure with -ing Forms

If one item in a list uses an -ing form, the others should match.

Incorrect: She enjoys reading, writing, and to study.

Correct: She enjoys reading, writing, and studying.

Parallel Structure with Infinitives

If one item uses "to + verb," the others should follow the same pattern.

Incorrect: Students want to succeed, improving their grades, and to graduate.

Correct: Students want to succeed, to improve their grades, and to graduate.

Parallel Structure with Paired Ideas

Use parallel structure with words like "and," "or," "not only...but also," and "either...or."

Incorrect: The course is not only useful but also helps students improve their writing.

Correct (Option 1): The course is not only useful but also helpful.

Correct (Option 2): The course not only teaches important skills but also improves students' writing.

Parallel Structure in Comparisons

When comparing ideas, make sure both parts follow the same pattern.

Incorrect: Writing essays is more difficult than to complete quizzes.

Correct: Writing essays is more difficult than completing quizzes.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Mixing Forms:

Using different grammatical forms in the same list (verbs, nouns, phrases).

Incorrect: Students need to study, good time management, and attending class.

Correct: Students need to study, manage their time, and attend class.

Incomplete Parallelism:

Not matching both sides of a sentence or comparison.

Incorrect: She enjoys reading more than to write.

Correct: She enjoys reading more than writing.

Unclear Meaning:

When ideas do not follow a consistent pattern, the sentence becomes confusing.

Incorrect: The class focuses on writing essays, grammar, and how to revise papers.

Correct: The class focuses on writing essays, studying grammar, and revising papers.

Tips for Using Parallel Structure

- Look for lists or repeated ideas in your writing
- Keep the grammatical form the same for each item
- Check sentences with "and," "or," or comparisons
- Read your sentence out loud to check if it sounds balanced

Final Takeaway

Parallel structure creates balance in your writing. When your sentences are consistent, your ideas will be clearer and easier for your reader to follow.