

# Parallelism

In English grammar, parallelism involves the use of an identical structure or pattern within one or more sentences when comparing or contrasting items in a list. Following the same grammatical pattern in each part of the sentence creates balance and a sense of order for the reader.

For example, if the first item in a list is a noun, the items following it should also be nouns. If an infinitive verb phrase (to + verb) is used first, 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.

The best way to combine clauses is to use coordinating 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*. Note 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- Poisons should be withdrawn from sale if they result in land, sea or air pollution.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- Poisons should be withdrawn from sale if they have an adverse effect on humans, animals or environmentally sensitive areas.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

1. In this exercise, you need to identify the part of the sentence that is *not parallel* and correct it by rewriting it. Refer to the example below: the two items listed are in a forms that differ from the first part of the sentence. Note how the underlined words are changed in the rewritten version so that the grammar is parallel.

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

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

- a) Being a student can be lonely, but it can also bring you happiness.
  - b) Learning how to drive can be exciting and bring rewards.
  - c) Owning a home can bring about contentment and being independent.
  - d) The new movies have arrived: they are neither illuminating nor make you amused.
  - e) The organisation promotes sustainable landscaping practices, green building-construction methods and products, and minimizing pesticide use in the home.
2. 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*.

Visit the Writing Space on your campus to discuss your answers. Find out more:  
<https://federation.edu.au/current-students/learning-and-study/get-help-on-campus/learning-skills-advisors>

### Question 2

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

### Question 1

## ANSWERS

## Other helpsheets available

- Capitalisation
- Punctuation
- Articles
- Sentence Structure
- Writing in an Academic Style