



# Parallel Structure

Creating a parallel structure gives the same amount of importance to two different items. Think of it as leveling a scale; in order to get the scale level, it's important that both sides have the same weight. This is the general concept of parallel structure. The general reasons to use it vary. Parallel structure can be used to create clarity, increase readability, and add style.

## The Levels of Parallel Structure...

### Level One: Words

This is a way that writers can compare two different things—nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs—within one sentence.

#### Examples

##### Nouns

- Bianca eats **salads** and **donuts**.
- Kari rides **bicycles** and **motorcycles**.

##### Verbs

- Nicole and her sister **have built** and **have sold** a dollhouse.
- Toni either **walks** or **bikes** to class.

##### Adjectives

- Dr. Consilio is both **friendly** and **professional**.
- Mark is not only **smart**, but also **athletic**.

##### Adverbs

- Delia runs **slowly** and **reluctantly**.
- Carrie works **swiftly** and **accurately**.

### Level Two: Phrases

In a complex sentence, parallel structure is also seen in phrases.



## Examples

### Nouns

- **Math** is as difficult as **science**.
- **Books** are as important as **movies**.

### Verbs

- As soon as I **see** the forecast, I **groan** and **whine**.
- Before Stephanie **starts** her car, she **puts** her seatbelt on and **turns** on the radio.

### Adverbial phrases

- Lauren will leave in in **less than five minutes** and **show up in time for the movie**.
- Teachers love their time off **in the summer** and **on holidays**.

### Infinitive Phrases

- Jessica hopes **to visit** Paris and **to see** the Eiffel Tower.
- My doctor encouraged me **to eat** more vegetables and **to get** more sleep.

### Participle Phrases

- **Seeing the accident** and **hearing the ambulance**, the driver slowed down.
- **Riding through the town** and **eating the local food**, Michael began to love Milan.

## Level Three: Clauses

Clause patterns have to match to keep parallelism. Let's look at some examples to further explain.

## Examples

### Nouns

- She said that **she** was working more but not that **she** was earning enough money.
- Eric believed that **he** had made a beautiful sculpture and that **he** had created a masterpiece.

### Adjectives

- Sam had fun and was **happy** on the playground, yet she was **sad** at the dentist's office.
- Amber likes to be **healthy** and to be **busy**.



## Adverbs

- Since **she didn't like it** and because **she didn't eat it**, her parents excused her from the table.
- As **it was** a cloudy day and because **it was** cold, Brother Chris stayed indoors.

## Test yourself

Now that you know some more about parallel structures see if you can put your new skills to use in the exercises below. **Combine the following sentences to create a single sentence using parallel structures.**

1. Ashley thought the plot of her book was good. Ashley thought the ending was good, too.
2. To keep warm, Donna wore gloves. She also wore a coat.

**Further Assistance:** For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.