

Name: _____

≡ PARALLELISM

What needs improvement in the following sentences?

- Taylor thought the movie was boring, silly, and was too long.
- Sandy found the dog food to have an odd color, an unpleasant smell, and it tasted bad.
- Sandy barked at a cat, Sandy barked at the moon. Sandy barked at a rustling trash bag.

✍ Sentences are smoother and easier to read when ideas that are compared or contrasted are expressed in similar grammatical patterns without unnecessary repetition. Taking out repetitive words and combining similar sentences and ideas is called **parallel structure, parallel construction, and parallelism**. So the 3rd sentence listed above, would be more effective if it were written:

- Sandy barked at a cat, the moon, and a rustling trash bag.

☞ Notice that the commas are placed after each item in the list except the last one.

When using parallel structure, the main rule to remember is that the things in the list must be the same grammatical form. This is best summed up in the following:

The items in the list must be **all nouns, all verbs, all adjectives, all adverbs, all infinitives (to--), all prepositional phrases, all gerunds (-ing words), or all clauses.**

So what triggers a need for parallelism?

*When using the conjunctions **and, but, or, nor**, make sure they connect the same parts of speech or phrases or clauses with the same grammatical structure.*

- ☹ I like to run, to swim, and reading.
- ☺ I like to run, to swim, and to read.
- ☺ I like running, to swimming, and reading.

*Likewise, use parallelism when making comparisons using “**than**” or “**as**.”*

- ☹ Smiling takes fewer muscles than to frown.
- ☺ Smiling takes fewer muscles than frowning.

*Also use parallel structure when combining ideas with the following word pairs: **not only...but also, from....to...., on the one hand....on the other hand, both...and..., neither.....nor, either....or, rather...than...***

- ☹ Sandy changed from an undisciplined, wild dog to being obedient and faithful
- ☺ Sandy changed from an undisciplined, wild dog to an obedient, faithful companion.

✎ Practice—Identify and fix faulty parallelism. Make sure that the items in the series are in the same grammatical form, that any preposition used fits all items in the series, and that there is no unbalanced repetition.

1. I love to run, to swim, and punctuating sentences.
2. Tyler is friendly, a smart person, and can play sports really well.
3. Odysseus is famous for his courage, his cunning, and never giving up.
4. Required summer reading helps students maintain reading skills and how to stay organized.
5. There are trains leaving the station in the morning and noon.
6. The cancer researcher is interested and excited about the new advances in medical technology.

Which passes the parallelism test?

- A. Required summer reading can benefit the entire school district by boosting school rankings, increasing community pride, and it also results in higher property values.
- B. Required summer reading can benefit the entire school district by boosting school rankings, increasing community pride, and by raising higher property values.
- C. neither A nor B
- D. both A and B