



The Learning Centre

Grammar Rules

Parallelism

Parallelism is achieved when the words/phrases within a pair or list use *parallel* (coinciding) forms. The words/phrases can take on the form of **verbs**, **gerunds**, and **nouns**.

For this explanation, let's pretend that verbs, gerunds, and nouns correspond with the following shapes:

 **verbs**

 **gerunds**

 **nouns**



Faulty Parallel Forms (or, Lack of Parallelism)

A sentence lacks parallelism when the forms of words/phrases within a pair or list are inconsistent. For example, the following sentence contains a pair of phrases with faulty parallel forms:

On Tuesday mornings, I **go to the grocery store** and then **working out at the gym**. ×

In this example, the first phrase, **go to the grocery store**, takes on the form of a verb (“go”). The second phrase, **working out at the gym**, takes on the form of a gerund (“working out”). A gerund may look like a verb, but it functions as a noun.

Therefore, using the assigned shapes, the structure of the sentence looks like this:

On Tuesday mornings, I  and then 

The two forms are inconsistent, causing the sentence to lack parallelism.



Fixing Faulty Parallel Forms

In order to fix the faulty parallel forms, we must choose which form works best for the sentence. Then, we can change the less appropriate form to coincide with the appropriate form.

For example, in the previous example, it makes most sense to pair the subject (“I”) with a verb. Therefore, we will change the gerund into a verb:

On Tuesday mornings, I go to the grocery store and then I work out at the gym. ✓

Using the shape method again, the new example reads as follows:


On Tuesday mornings, I  and then I .

The phrases within the sentence are both in verb form; thus, parallelism has been achieved.

Other Examples


Parallelism Error:

I like to walk at the park, swim at the beach, and running along the esplanade. ✗




Correction:

I like to walk at the park, swim at the beach, and run along the esplanade. ✓



Parallelism Error:

My favourite sports are badminton, volleyball, and playing baseball. ✗



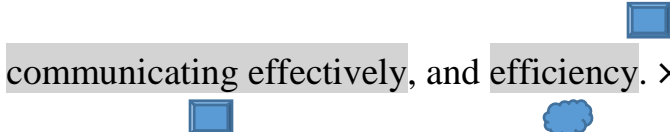
Correction:

My favourite sports are badminton, volleyball, and baseball. ✓



Parallelism Error:

Donald's busy teaching job requires: working interactively with colleagues, communicating effectively, and efficiency. ✗



Correction:

Donald's busy teaching job requires: collegiality, effective communication, and efficiency. ✓

