



VERBAL LIVE PREP 2.0

Markers for Parallel List



Pre-requisite: SC Session 3

Parallelism

MARKERS FOR PARALLEL LIST

Hi folks,

Parallelism is one of the most heavily tested concepts in GMAT. The non-natives struggle with this concept because most of them study this concept for the first time when they start preparing for the GMAT. To help you understand this concept better, we have decided to cover a few topics in parallelism through a few articles. Beginning that endeavor, this article deals with **Markers in the Parallel List**.

WHY TO LEARN ABOUT MARKERS

Most of the times, it becomes difficult to solve an SC problem pertaining to parallelism because we cannot identify the correct list in the sentence. Hence, it is important to learn about the markers in the parallel list as they help us in more than one way. Knowledge of markers has the following benefits:

1. It helps in identifying the correct intended list in the sentence.
2. It helps in ascertaining the correct marker for the list.
3. It helps in making all the entities in the list grammatically as well as logically parallel.

This article is aimed at helping you gain better understanding of the markers so that you are better prepared to handle parallelism problems.

LAWS OF PARALLELISM

Before delving into the markers and learning how to identify a list with the help of these markers, let us take a quick look at the general laws of parallelism:

1. A parallel list always contains a marker.
2. The list contains the appropriate marker to convey the intended meaning through the list.
3. The entities in the list are grammatically as well as logically parallel.

So let us now study a bit more about these laws.

TYPES OF MARKERS

As we said, every parallel list contains a marker. Hence, it is important to learn about them to identify the correct list. Identifying the correct list is half battle won in solving the parallelism problem. Once the correct list is identified, identifying the errors in the entities and making them

parallel, both grammatically and logically become really easy.

We can find two kinds of markers in parallel lists – single-word makers and dual-word markers.

SINGLE-WORD MARKERS

As the name suggests, ‘single-word markers’ are the markers that consist of only one word. For example – and, or, but, etc. These markers join two or more entities and appear before the last entity in the list. Let’s take a few example sentences to see the usage of these markers:

SIMPLE EXAMPLE 1:

Joe never steps out of the house without his wallet, watch, and umbrella.

The sentence gives us general information about Joe. It says that he never goes anywhere without his wallet, his watch, and his umbrella. Notice the presence of “and”. It is one of the most common single-word markers that indicate the presence of a list in the sentence. Hence, the entities joined by “and” make the list in the sentence. The 3 entities joined by “and” are

- Wallet
- Watch
- Umbrella

SIMPLE EXAMPLE 2:

Sue needs a pen, a pencil, or a marker to highlight this advertisement in the newspaper for future reference.

The sentence says that Sue needs something to mark a particular advertisement in the newspaper. She can do the job of highlighting the ad by using a pen, a pencil, or a marker. Notice that “or” is the marker in the sentence that indicates the presence of a list in this sentence. This marker joins 3 similar entities

- a pen
- a pencil
- a marker

COMPLEX EXAMPLE 1:

Driven to towns by scarcity of food due to drought this summer, bears **have wandered through farmer's markets, broken into cars after sniffing out fast-food leftovers, and ransacked people's kitchens.**

The sentence says that this year's drought has led to scarcity of food that has forced the bears to come to town in search of food. They have walked into farmer's market, broken into cars, and even gotten into people's kitchen.

This sentence uses one-word marker "and" that joins the three actions done by the bears to look for food. The sentence has a list of three actions done by the bears.

- Have wandered through farmer's markets
- Have broken into cars after sniffing out fast-food leftovers
- Have ransacked people's kitchens

OFFICIAL EXAMPLE 1: OGV2#1 (WITH CORRECT ANSWER CHOICE E)

Like ants, termites have an elaborate social structure in which **a few individuals reproduce and the rest serve the colony by tending juveniles, gathering food, building the nest, or battling intruders.**

This sentence presents comparison between ants and termites. Just like ants, termites also have a detailed social structure with well-defined jobs. While some reproduce, the others serve the colony. They do this job by looking after the young ones, collecting food, building the nest, or battling intruders.

This OG sentence has two parallel lists. The **first list is marked in blue** while the **second list is marked in purple**. Both the lists contain single-word markers – "and" and "or" respectively.

The first list is the main list **that defines the main jobs of termites in their society**. The second list is the sub-list **that defines the actions done under serving the colony**. While **"and" join two main jobs of termites**, **"or" joins together the actions done to serve the colony**.

DUAL-WORD MARKERS

As the name goes, these markers consist of two words. These dual words always appear together in a list. For example: either... or..., both... and..., from... to..., etc. The list containing 'dual-word markers' has only two entities in the list. Let's take a few examples here:

SIMPLE EXAMPLE 1:

With so many things to take care of, Sam can **either** prepare a speech **or** participate in the inaugural song.

The sentence says that because Sam has too many things to look after, he can do any of the 2 things - either prepare a speech or participate in the inaugural song.

This sentence uses double-word marker “either... or...”. This is so because the sentence talks about options. Sam can do only one of the two things.

Since the option is only between two activities, use of “either... or...” is appropriate. If Sam had to choose one activity among three, then the sentence would use the single-word marker “or”. Note that we cannot use dual-word markers for more than two entities in the list.

SIMPLE EMAPLE 2:

Mary has gotten **both** an iPad **and** an iPhone for her birthday present.

The sentence says that Mary got two presents for her birthday, an iPad and an iPhone, both Apple products. These entities are joined by the dual-word marker “both... and...”. Both these markers are followed by one entity each. If Mary had gotten more than two presents, then the use of this dual-word marker would not have been appropriate. Then the entities would have been joined together with single-word marker “and”.

COMPLEX EXAMPLE 1:

The external genes of the new strain of swine flu known as H3N2v that has resulted in one human death so far **jumped from humans to pigs** in the 1990s **and circulated** in them separately from the seasonal human H3N2.

This sentence talks about the new strain of swine flu. The external genes of this particular strain that is called H3N2v jumped from humans to pigs in the 1990s and circulated in pigs separately from the seasonal human flu H3N2. H3N2v has reportedly killed one human so far.

So this sentence has two lists. The first list is marked in blue. This lists talks about how the external genes of H3N2v spread. The second list, marked in purple uses the dual-word marker “from... to...” to convey how did it spread. The external genes jumped from one entity to another.

OFFICIAL EXAMPLE 1: OGV2#4 (WITH CORRECT ANSWER CHOICE C)

The voluminous personal papers of Thomas Alva Edison reveal that his inventions typically **did not spring to life in a flash of inspiration but evolved slowly from previous works.**

This sentence says that piles of personal papers of Edison prove that his inventions came not in a flash of inspiration. All his work slowly evolved from previous works.

This sentence presents two characteristics of Edison's inventions. They did not come to life in a flash of inspiration. They slowly evolved from his previous works. These characteristics are presented by dual-word marker "not... but...". Both the markers are followed by one entity each.

A QUICK LOOK AT THE MARKERS:

Single-word Markers	Dual-word Markers
and	Either... or...
but	Neither... nor...
or	Both... and...
	Not... but...
	Not only... but also...
	Whether... or...
	Rather than...
	From... to
	Between... and...

Note that this is not the exhaustive list of the markers. This list also does not contain the markers of comparison. Parallelism in comparison will be dealt in separate article.

ERRORS PERTAINING TO PARALLELISM MARKERS

So we learnt that presence of marker in a sentence indicates the presence of a list. GMAC introduces parallelism errors in a sentence in various ways. One of the ways to introduce error is by using inappropriate marker in the list. Using inappropriate marker may include using a marker that changes the intended meaning of the sentence, using a dual-word marker to list more than two entities in a list, using wrong pairs in the dual-word marker, etc.

1. USING INCORRECT MARKER TO CONVEY INTENDED MEANING THROUGH LIST

A list must contain an appropriate marker to correctly convey the intended meaning of the sentence. Incorrect markers may change the intended meaning of a sentence. Let's take examples to see how this error is introduced, what effect this error has, and how it can be corrected.

SIMPLE EXAMPLE 1:

Sue needs a pen, a pencil, or a marker to highlight this advertisement in the newspaper for future reference.

The sentence looks familiar? Well yes, we have already analyzed this sentence under the heading “Single-Word Markers”. This sentence uses the marker “or” to present options. Sue needs any one of the listed entities to mark the ad in the newspaper. Now let’s replace “or” here with “and”.

Sue needs a pen, a pencil, and a marker to highlight this advertisement in the newspaper for future reference

Using “and” changes the meaning of the sentence. Now, this sentence does not talk of options. This sentence does not say that Sue needs any one of the listed articles. It now says that Sue needs all the three listed items to mark the ad. Probably, she needs to highlight that ad in a certain manner and that is why she needs all three items. This sentence definitely conveys a different meaning than that conveyed by the original one. Hence if the intended meaning per original sentence has to be communicated, then the second sentence is incorrect because “and” is not the correct marker to convey the intended logical meaning conveyed by “or”. And vice-versa, i.e. if the original meaning is as communicated by second sentence with “and”, then the first sentence changes that intended meaning. Thus, make a note of how meaning communicated by the sentence can change if the marker connecting the list changes.

OFFICIAL EXAMPLE 1: OG 12#17 (WITH CORRECT ANSWER CHOICE D)

The commission has directed advertisers to restrict the use of the word “natural” to foods that do not contain color or flavor additives, chemical preservatives, or anything that has been synthesized.

This sentence says that the commission has asked the advertisers not to use the word “natural” for those foods that contain color or flavor additives, chemical preservatives or anything made artificially. Hence the sentence presents option. If the food contain any of one these listed items, then the advertisers cannot call it “natural”.

Now let’s analyze the sentence with incorrect answer **choice E**:

The commission has directed advertisers to restrict the use of the word “natural” to foods that do not contain color or flavor additives, chemical preservatives, and anything synthesized.

This sentence is grammatically correct but changes the intended meaning of the sentence. Doing away with “or” has taken away the options. The sentence now means that the food cannot be called

natural if it contains all the listed items. But if it does not contain any one of the listed items, then it can be called “natural” because to not have the “natural” tag, it has to have all the listed items. This is certainly not the intended meaning of the sentence. Presence of any one of the listed item will disqualify the food product from the designation of “natural”.

2. USING DUAL-WORD MARKER TO LIST MORE THAN TWO ENTITIES

A list containing dual-word marker can only have two entities in the list. If the list contains more than two items, then it should contain single-word marker and not the dual-word marker. Let’s take an official example that presents this error:

OFFICIAL EXAMPLE 1: OG V2#5

Hundreds of species of fish generate and discharge electric currents, in bursts or as steady electric fields around their bodies, using their power either to find and attack prey, to defend themselves, or also for communicating and navigating.

The sentence says that hundreds of species of fish discharge electric currents to do three things:

- a. to find and attack prey,
- b. to defend themselves,
- c. for communicating and navigating.

Note that we are only looking at the marker-related error in this sentence. There are three items listed for which many species of fish discharge electric current. But this list contains dual-word marker “either... or...”. Dual-word markers can only be used to list two entities. Hence use of this marker is incorrect here. Hence we can eliminate all those answer choices that uses dual-word marker.

Now let’s take a look at the correct answer **choice E**:

Hundreds of species of fish generate and discharge electric currents, in bursts or as steady electric fields around their bodies, using their power to find and attack prey, to defend themselves, or to communicate and navigate.

This choice replaces the dual-word marker “either... or...” with only “or” to correctly list three items. Use of single word marker “or” is correct to list three items in the list. The sentence clearly

communicates that the many species of fish generate electric currents for one of the listed functions.

3. USING INCORRECT PAIR IN DUAL-WORD MARKER

Every dual-word marker has a well-defined usage so it should be used in idiomatically correct fashion, i.e. it must be used with the words that make the correct pair (check the list for dual-word markers above). If the pair is broken by replacing any of the words in the dual-word maker with any other word, then the sentence stands incorrect. This error may also be classified as idiom error. Let's take an example:

OFFICIAL EXAMPLE 1: OG V2#5

William H. Johnson's artistic debt to Scandinavia is evident in paintings that range from sensitive portraits of citizens in his wife's Danish home, Kerteminde, and awe-inspiring views of fjords and mountain peaks in the western and northern regions of Norway.

This sentence talks about artist William H. Johnson. His artistic debt to Scandinavia can be very well seen in paintings that range from sensitive portraits of citizens in his wife's Danish home, Kerteminde, to awe-inspiring views of fjords and mountain peaks in the western and northern regions of Norway.

The correct dual-word marker is "from... to..." and not "from... and...". Hence this sentence is incorrect because of the pairing of wrong words.

Choice B is the correct answer choice for this OG sentence:

William H. Johnson's artistic debt to Scandinavia is evident in paintings that range from sensitive portraits of citizens in his wife's Danish home, Kerteminde, to awe-inspiring views of fjords and mountain peaks in the western and northern regions of Norway.

This choice uses the correct words to form the correct dual-word marker.

TAKE AWAY

In a nutshell always keep the following in mind about parallel lists and markers:

1. A parallel list always contains a marker.
2. The list contains the appropriate marker to convey the intended meaning through the list.
3. The entities in a parallel list are grammatically as well as logically parallel.