Grammar Vs. Logic in Parallelism

An e-GMAT Primer

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PARALLELISM: GRAMMAR VS LOGIC

Hi folks,

Before we start discussing whether grammar is more important in parallelism or logic, let's look at the following sentence.

    A. *John prepared for impending currency crisis, storing enough food and water for future and posting his pictures online.*

    B. *John prepared for impending currency crisis, storing enough food and water for future and posted his pictures online.*

Which choice do you think is correct – A or B. Which of them is grammatically parallel? Both A and B look to be grammatically parallel, however only B makes logical sense. How do we say that?

When you look at the meaning of the sentence, you will notice that structurally "storing enough food and water" and "posting his pictures online" represent "how" John prepared for the impending currency crisis. However, logically "posting his pictures online" has nothing to do with how John prepared for the impending currency crisis.

On the other hand, choice B is structurally different where the sentence is so written such that "posted his pictures online" is a separate activity from preparing from "preparing for impending currency crisis", thus making the entire sentence logical.

TAKE AWAY: PARALLELISM - GO BY LOGIC

Every time we get to a problem pertaining to parallelism, instinctively we check the grammatical structure of the entities to make the list parallel. Now, the entities must have same grammatical structure to make the list parallel, alright. What we must keep in mind is that the **grammatically parallel entities in the list must convey the LOGICAL INTENDED meaning of the sentence**. If the grammatically parallel entities make the sentence illogical, then the list is not considered parallel.

HOW TO GET TO THE LOGIC

So, now we know that when we get to solve a parallelism problem, we must first understand the logical meaning of the sentence, and accordingly make the entities grammatically parallel to convey that meaning. A grammatically correct parallel list will still be incorrect if it does not convey logical meaning.

There are two essential things that can lead us to the logical meaning of a sentence:

1.   <u>Understand the context of the sentence</u>: It is very important to spend some time with the original sentence, analyzing it to decipher the logical intended meaning. The original sentence

always sets the context for the logical meaning. Even if any enetity in the list conveys illogical meaning, that is a clear hint that we must correct that entity first for logical parallelism and then make it grammatically parallel with other logical entities in the list.

2.   Pay close attention to sentence structure: Knowledge of sentence structure helps in determining the correct role of the entities in the list so that they can convey logical sense. This knowledge also helps in choosing appropriate grammatical structure of the entities to keep them grammatically parallel.

GUIDED PRACTICE

 We have changed a few words in some of the official questions and the answer choices so that our discussion on the topic later in the article is more pertinent to parallelism without the fear of getting digressed to other conceptual errors. Try these questions before viewing the explanations.

EXAMPLE 1

John prepared for Hurricane Sandy in advance, <u>storing enough food and water, purchased flashlights and candles for possible power outages, and charging</u> his cellphone to reach out to authorities in case of emergency.

- A. storing enough food and water, purchased flashlights and candles for possible power outages, and charging
- B. storing enough food and water, purchased flashlights and candles for possible power outages, had charged
- C. storing enough food and water, purchasing flashlights and candles for possible power outages, and charging
- D. stored enough food and water, purchased flashlights and candles for possible power outages, and charged
- E. stored enough food and water, and purchased flashlights and candles for possible power outages, being charged

MEANING ANAYSIS:

It is very essential to understand the meaning of the sentence. The sentence says that John prepared himself for Hurricane Sandy. Following is the list of things he did for his preparation:

- A. He stored enough food and water,
- B. He purchased flashlights and candles to handle power crisis, and
- C. He charged his cellphone for emergency use.

ERROR ANALYSIS: (Related only to Parallelism)

There is a list of things that John did to prepare himself for Hurricane Sandy. The verb-ing modifier "storing..." correctly modifies the preceding clause, giving additional information as to what all John did in his preparation. Since there is list of things John did, the entities in this list must be parallel. However, "purchased..." is not parallel to "storing..." and "charging..."

 PoE:

Since we are talking about the logical and grammatical parallelism in this article, let us take a look at those answer choices that stand incorrect despite being grammatically parallel. Here, we will also analyze the correct answer choice to reinforce the importance of Logic in parallelism.

GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT BUT LOGICALLY INCORRECT CHOICE D: stored enough food and water, purchased flashlights and candles for possible power outages, and charged: This choice is grammatically sound because all the entities in this choice are grammatically parallel. Notice that "stored...", "purchased...", and "charged..." are now parallel to "prepared" as well. However, despite being grammatically parallel, this choice is incorrect because the meaning conveyed by this choice is ILLOGICAL.

Per this choice, the entities in the list do no present information as to HOW John prepared for Sandy. These entities are now independent entities and the choice now conveys that John performed all these four actions independent of each other. This is not the intended meaning of the sentence.

CORRECT CHOICE C: storing enough food and water, purchasing flashlights and candles for possible power outages, and charging: This choice is CORRECT because it is not only grammatically parallel but also logically parallel. The three verb-ing modifiers in the correctly modifies the preceding clause, presenting information about the modified clause.

GUIDED EXAMPLE 2

Among lower paid workers union members are less likely than non-union members to be enrolled in lower end insurance plans <u>imposing stricter limits on medical services and requiring doctors to see more patients and spend</u> less time with each. (GMAT Prep)

    A. imposing stricter limits on medical services and requiring doctors to see more patients, and spend

    B. imposing stricter limits on medical services, requiring doctors to see more patients, and spending

C. that impose stricter limits on medical services, require doctors to see more patients, and spend

D. that impose stricter limits on medical services and require doctors to see more patients, spending

E. that impose stricter limits on medical services, requiring doctors to see more patients and spending

MEANING ANALYSIS:

Lower end insurance plans do two things:

A. impose strict limits on medical services, and
B. require doctors to see more patients.

As a result of seeing more patients, the doctors will spend less time with each patient.

ERROR ANALYSIS: (Related only to Parallelism)

Verb-ing modifiers "imposing…" and "requiring…" correctly modifies "low end insurance plans". They are grammatically parallel too. However, "and spend time…" is not correctly written. This entity is not the part of the list but the result of the last entity in the list. Hence, it must be written correctly.

PoE:

Since we are talking about the logical and grammatical parallelism in this article, let us discuss only those answer choices that pertain to the topic of this article.

GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT BUT LOGICALLY INCORRECT CHOICE B: imposing stricter limits on medical services, requiring doctors to see more patients, and spending: Per this grammatically correct choice, the "low end insurance policies" do three things. This certainly does not make sense because the policies do not spend less time with each (patient).

GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT BUT LOGICALLY INCORRECT CHOICE C: that impose stricter limits on medical services, require doctors to see more patients, and spend: This choice is similar to choice B: It again conveys the same illogical meaning by making all the three entities grammatically parallel to each other.

GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT BUT LOGICALLY INCORRECT CHOICE E: that impose stricter limits on medical services, requiring doctors to see more patients and spending: This choice is also grammatically correct. The verb-ing modifiers "requiring…"and "spending…" preceded by comma modifies the preceding clause. This modification conveys absolutely illogical meaning. It now says that the result of imposing stricter limits are that the doctors will have to see more patients and the policies will spend less time with each patient.

<u>CORRECT CHOICE D</u>: that impose stricter limits on medical services and require doctors to see more patients, spending: This choice corrects the list by making "impose…" and "require…" grammatically parallel to each other. Verb-ing modifier "spending" preceded by comma correctly presents the result of the preceding action, correctly conveying the result of doctors seeing more patients

TAKEAWAYS

1. It is not enough for the entities in the list just to be grammatically parallel. The grammatically correct entities must convey LOGICAL meaning.
2. Grammatically parallel list will stand incorrect if it communicates illogical meaning.
3. Logic governs the grammatical structure of the entities in the parallel list.

EXERCISE QUESTIONS

We have changed a few words in some of the official questions and the answer choices so that our discussion on the topic later in the article is more pertinent to parallelism without the fear of getting digressed to other conceptual errors. Try these questions

Since digital recording offers essentially perfect reproduction - on compact discs, digital audiotapes, or digital videodiscs - audiophiles can accumulate <u>music, transferring them from one format to another, copying it, and digitally altering it with little effort and not damaging</u> the sound quality. (GMAT Prep)

A. music, transferring them from one format to another, copying it, and digitally altering it with little effort and not damaging
B. music, transferring it from one format to another, copying it, and digitally altering it with little effort and no damage to
C. music, transfer it from one format to another, copy it, and digitally alter it with little effort and no damage to
D. music and transfer it from one format to another, copy it, and then digitally altering it with little effort and not damaging
E. music and transfer it from one format to another, copying it, and digitally alter it with little effort and no damage to

As the etched lines on computer memory chips have become thinner and <u>the chips' circuits more complex, both the power of the chips and the electronic devices they drive have</u> vastly increased. (GMAT Prep)

A. the chips' circuits more complex, both the power of the chips and the electronic devices they drive have
B. the chips' circuits more complex, the power of both the chips and the electronic devices they drive has
C. the chips' circuits are more complex, both the power of the chips and the electronic devices they drive has
D. their circuits are more complex, the power of both the chips and the electronic devices they drive have
E. their circuits more complex, both the power of the chips and the electronic devices they drive have