

PARALLELISM

☀️ “Parallelism is a lot more mechanical/systematic than some students believe at first”- Ron Purewal

To start with we'll study the following 6 sentences:

1. Most fossils of species X were found in Tennessee or Kentucky.
2. Most fossils of species X were found in Tennessee or in Kentucky.
3. Most fossils of species X were found either in Tennessee or Kentucky.
4. Most fossils of species X were found either in Tennessee or in Kentucky.
5. Most fossils of species X were found in either Tennessee or in Kentucky.
6. Most fossils of species X were found in either Tennessee or Kentucky.

We'll analyse the above sentences while figuring out which of them are parallel in construction.

Basic Mechanical principle of Parallelism:

The parallel structures are indicated by **Parallel Tags** (or **Signal Words** or **Markers**)
The **tags** are the words that **require** parallel structures. (Either/or in above cases), which means that if you have “either X or Y”, then the “X” and the “Y” must be parallel.

Signal Words indicate that you are looking at parallel structures.

The words that follow these tags are automatically included in the parallel structures. These following words must have parallel grammar. You cannot omit words that follow one of these tags.

So, let's analyse the above sentences.

1. Most fossils of species X were found in Tennessee or Kentucky. ✓
Noun Noun

As explained above the tag here is **or**. The words preceding and following the tag are Tennessee and Kentucky, which are both nouns. Hence the sentence is parallel.

2. Most fossils of species X were found in Tennessee or in Kentucky. ✓
Prep. Phrase Prep Phrase

As explained above the tag here is **or**. The words preceding and following the tag are in Tennessee and in Kentucky, which are both prepositional phrases. Hence the sentence is parallel.

3. Most fossils of species X were found either in Tennessee or Kentucky. X
Following words following word.

As explained above the tag here is **either** and **or**. The following words are not parallel. Hence the sentence is **not** parallel.

4. Most fossils of species X were found either in Tennessee or in Kentucky. ✓
Prep. Phrase Prep. Phrase

As explained above the tag here is **either** and **or**. The following words are in Tennessee and in Kentucky, which are both prepositional phrases. Hence the sentence is parallel.

5. Most fossils of species X were found in either Tennessee or in Kentucky. X
Following word following words

As explained above the tag here is **either** and **or**. The following words are not parallel. Hence the sentence is **not** parallel.

6. Most fossils of species X were found in either Tennessee or Kentucky. ✓
Noun Noun

As explained above the tag here is **either** and **or**. The following words are Tennessee and Kentucky, which are both nouns. Hence the sentence is parallel.

Now the question is what about the parallel tags that only have one component? Like **AND/OR** – two most common parallelism tags. So we'll re-examine the sentence number 1 and 2.

The process to follow is:

- Proceed from **RIGHT TO LEFT** in your analysis (because only the right hand part is tagged).
- Look at the words **following** the tag. These words **must** be the right hand parallel structure.
- Then decide what words you need on the left.
- If they are **anywhere**, then the structures are properly parallel.

Sentence No. 1: Most fossils of species X were found in Tennessee or Kentucky.
Noun Noun

As said above, we start from **Kentucky**, which is a proper noun. As we move left of **or** we find **Tennessee**, which is also a proper noun. Hence, the sentences are parallel.

Sentence No. 2: Most fossils of species X were found in Tennessee or in Kentucky
Prep. Phrase Prep. Phrase

Similarly, we start from right and we find **in Kentucky**, which is a prepositional phrase. As we move left of **or** we find **in Tennessee**, which is also a prepositional phrase. Hence, the sentences are parallel.

Some examples (Analyse Right to Left):

1. I want to eat fish and chips , drink Mountain Dew , and go to sleep. ✓
VERB VERB VERB

2. I want to eat fish and chips , drink Mountain Dew , and I want to go to sleep. X
↑ ↑
NOT PARALLEL

3. I want to eat fish and chips , to drink Mountain Dew , and to go to go to sleep. ✓
INFINITIVE INFINITIVE INFINITIVE

Let's analyse option E now.

the sloth hangs from trees by its long rubbery limbs, sleeps 15 hours a day, and
Main clause Just verb
it moves frequently enough → **NOT PARALLEL**
verb with subject

Again, the key here is to analyse the statement **right to left**.

☀ **In GMAT:**

If there is a list of three or more things, there must be a COMMA before the final "and".

Which means, "X, Y and Z" → this is not a proper list of three things?

"X, Y, and Z" → this is proper list of three things.

If you take a look the option D and E in the above question you see that option D **doesn't** have a comma before the final **and** while option E **has** a comma before the final **and** which means that option D clearly implies that there is no list of three things which is apparently correct.

Q. Until Berta and Earnst Scharrer established the concept of neurosecretion in 1928, scientists believed that either cells secreted hormones, which made them endocrine cells and thus part of the endocrine system, or conducted electrical impulses, in which case they were nerve cells and thus part of the nervous system.

- (A) either cells secreted hormones, which made them
- (B) either cells secreted hormones, making them
- (C) either cells secreted hormones and were
- (D) cells either secreted hormones, in which case they were
- (E) cells either secreted hormones, which made them

If we look at the original sentence we find that **or** is followed by past participle of a verb (conducted), which means **either** should also follow similar construction. In option A, B, C **either** is followed by a noun, thus we can omit A, B, C from the possible choices.

Let's analyse option D now.

cells **either** secreted hormones, in which case they were
Past participle of a verb

Option E
cells either secreted **hormones, which** made them

↑
This is an incorrect use of "which" modifier- gives wrong meaning as "which" modifies "hormones"

So we see that option D is the correct choice. Option D is in fact 100% parallelism.
If you encounter parallelism this perfect, you should definitely pick it.

Now we'll analyse Parallelism with some more examples (remember to read right to left):

1. food that is nutritious for cats **but** that is poisonous for dogs ✓

2. food that is nutritious for cats **but** is poisonous for dogs ✓

3. food that is nutritious for cats **but** poisonous for dogs ✓

As you can see in the above three statements, when we analyse from right to left we find that all three statements are parallel in their own sense.

1. hand signs that natives use **and** that appear in local rituals ✓
That subordinate clause- modifying hand signs That subordinate clause- modifying hand signs

2. hand signs that natives use **and** appear in local rituals
Only verb on the left is use which is not parallel Appear-verb whose subject is hand signs
to appear
(Try writing "natives use and appear")

3. hand signs used by natives **and** appearing in local rituals ✓
Past participle used as an adjective to describe hand signs Present participle used as an adjective describing hand signs.

Similar to sentence no. 3, you can find a question in OG 12, no. 42.

Not all parallel structures have perfectly matching components.

Eg.

They argue just as frequently **and** about the same topics as the couple living next door to them.
Adverb-modifies "argue" Prep phrase use as an adverb modifying "argue"

The above is parallel, not perfectly though.

IF YOU HAVE AND/OR AS THE TAG, THE PARALLEL STRUCTURES SHOULD MAKE SENSE BY THEMSELVES, WITH ONLY EXCEPTION AS "BETWEEN"(Between X and Y- here you need both)

Q. A report by the American Academy for the Advancement of Science has concluded that much of the currently uncontrolled dioxins which North Americans are exposed to comes from the incineration of wastes.

(A) much of the currently uncontrolled dioxins which North Americans are exposed to comes

(B) much of the currently uncontrolled dioxins that North Americans are exposed to come

(C) much of the dioxins that are currently uncontrolled and that North Americans are exposed to comes

- (D) many of the dioxins that are currently uncontrolled and North Americans are exposed to come
- (E) many of the currently uncontrolled dioxins to which North Americans are exposed come

In the above question we can see that A, B, and C uses “much” which is wrong as dioxins is a countable noun and “much” cannot be used with countable nouns. There is another criterion on the basis of which we can discard B and C.

Ø **You are not allowed to end a modifier with a preposition.**

For example:

-the restaurant we ate at } INCORRECT
 -the person I spoke with }

-the restaurant AT which we ate } CORRECT
 -the person WITH whom I spoke }

On the basis of the above, we can rule out B and C.

Option D:

many of the dioxins that are currently uncontrolled and North Americans are exposed to come

and
New subject
Verb

↑
NOT PARALLEL
↑

Therefore, the only correct option is E.