

Parallelism

Basics

Understanding Parallelism

- Those parts of a sentence that are comparable must be structurally and logically similar.
- If the comparable parts are not parallel (similar), the sentence is incorrect. Changes have to then be made such that all comparable parts become parallel.
- While it may not always be essential to make each word in the comparable elements parallel, the most important words (such as verbs) should be parallel.

Parallelism – An Example

Correct the following sentence:

- *The dissatisfaction arose among the stakeholders because of the continual fights, the disagreements on crucial issues, and that there were no common interests or goals.*

There are three reasons for dissatisfaction. The structure of the first two parts is similar (noun phrases) while the structure of the third is different (clause). So, the structure of the third part has to be made similar to the first two. The most important words in the statement below -'fights', 'disagreements' and 'non-existence' are all nouns and therefore, parallel.

- *The dissatisfaction arose among the stakeholders because of the continual fights, the disagreements on crucial issues, and **the non-existence of** common interests or goals.*

Parallel Markers

- Parallel Markers are words that link or contrast items and make it necessary for those items to be parallel.
- Examples of common parallel markers are:
 - And (links two or more items)
 - Both...and
 - Or
 - Either...or
 - Not...but
 - Not only...but also
 - Rather than
 - From...to

Parallelism Among Verbs

- Ensure that the verbs are parallel. There should be no difference in the tenses of the different verbs in a sentence (unless the meaning requires so). Also, there should be no shift from an active to a passive verb.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *The teacher mastered the art himself and then it was taught to his students.*
 - It is incorrect to shift from an active to a passive verb (“it was taught”) in the same sentence.
 - *The teacher mastered the art himself and then **taught it to his students.***

Parallelism Among Infinitives

- Infinitives (“to” + verb) need to be parallel in a sentence, unless the meaning requires a change in usage.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *Among accomplishments considered desirable for women in 19th-century England were the abilities to play the piano, to sing, and dance well.*
 - The given sentence implies that “to” is needed only for the first and second options and not for the third. Thus, the parallelism is faulty.
 - *Among accomplishments considered desirable for women in 19th-century England were the abilities to play the piano, to sing, and **to dance well.***
- Or
- *Among accomplishments considered desirable for women in 19th-century England were the abilities to play the piano, sing, and dance well.*

Parallelism Among Infinitives

- Correct the following sentence:

- *For a child's proper education, it is important to introduce him to the world of books, to make him appreciate and love Nature, and develop in him compassion for all forms of life.*

- Parallelism missing in “develop in him”.

- *For a child's proper education, it is important to introduce him to the world of books, to make him appreciate and love Nature, and **to develop** in him compassion for all forms of life.*

Or

For a child's proper education, it is important to introduce him to the world of books, make him appreciate and love Nature, and develop in him compassion for all forms of life.

Parallelism Among Infinitives

- Identify the error:

- *The workers have been asked either to comply with the demands of the senior management or leave the organization.*

- Since there is a parallel marker before the first infinitive, “to” must be used before the verb following the second element of the marker.
- Thus, the sentence should be....

- *The workers have been asked either to comply with the demands of the senior management or to leave the organization.*

Or

- *The workers have been asked to either comply with the demands of the senior management or leave the organization.*

Parallelism Among Nouns

- To convey similar (parallel) meaning, similar noun forms must be used.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *Near the banks of the Floss, Mr. Tulliver built a house and mill.*
 - To show that one house and one mill were built, “a” has to be added before “mill”. Otherwise, the parallelism becomes faulty and a wrong meaning is conveyed (it seems “house and mill” is one unit).
 - *Near the banks of the Floss, Mr. Tulliver built a house and **a mill**.*

Parallelism Among Adjectives

- To convey similar (parallel) meaning, adjectives in a sentence must be parallel.
- Choose the correct option:
 - *Old and _____, Lily is now not even a shadow of what she once was.*
(wan/wanning)
 - While it is possible to use “wanning” (the verb form of “wan”) in this context, the adjective “wan” is more appropriate keeping in view the use of the word “old”.
 - Note: Else, “ageing” and “wanning” can be used together.
 - *Old and wan, Lily is now not even a shadow of what she once was.*

Parallelism Among Adverbs

- To convey similar (parallel) meaning, adverbs in a sentence must be parallel.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *Confidently and proud, Elloise climbed the dais.*
 - Parallelism should be maintained in the sentence structure. Thus, “-ly” should be added to “proud”.
 - **Note:** “-ly” is added to adjectives to convert them into adverbs.
 - Example:
Adjective: Honest
Adverb: Honestly
 - *Confidently and **proudly**, Elloise climbed the dais.*

Parallelism Among Gerunds

- Gerunds (verb + “-ing”, verbs acting as nouns) must be parallel when their roles in a sentence are similar.
- Complete the following sentence:
 - *I love reading, swimming, and _____. (dance)*
 - The third element has to be parallel with “reading” and “swimming”.
 - *I love reading, swimming, and dancing.*

Parallelism Among Clauses

- Clauses must be parallel when their roles in a sentence are similar.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *One's sense of responsibility recommends that one should properly feed one's pet and one has to properly bathe it.*
 - *Parallelism should be maintained in the use of clauses in a sentence.*
 - *One's sense of responsibility recommends that one should properly feed one's pet and **one should** properly bathe it.*

Or

- *One's sense of responsibility recommends that one should properly feed one's pet and properly bathe it.*

Parallelism Among Clauses

An interesting case.

- Correct the following sentence:

- *Fantasy tales, products of the writers' imagination and which are, at the same time, rooted in reality, are generally loved by children.*

- Parallelism missing in “products of...” and “which are...rooted in reality”.

- *Fantasy tales, **which are** products of the writers' imagination and which are, at the same time, rooted in reality, are generally loved by children.*

- Parallelism conserved in “which are products of...” and “which are...rooted in reality”.

Parallelism Among Working Verbs

- Only working verbs can be made parallel to other working verbs.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *The soldiers fought bravely and winning the battle.*
 - In the given sentence, “winning” is not a working verb.
 - *The soldiers fought bravely and **won the battle.***

Parallelism With Participles

- When a past or a present participle functions as an adjective, it can be made parallel to an adjective.
- Ensure parallelism in the following sentences:
 - *The juice, chilled and tasty, was served to the guests.*
 - “chilled” and “served” are both past participles. But “chilled” is functioning as an adjective here. Thus, it is parallel to the adjective “tasty”. The sentence is correct.
 - *In a voice strong and commanding, the Lieutenant gave the orders.*
 - Since the present participle “commanding” functions as an adjective, modifying the noun “voice”, it is parallel to the adjective “strong”. Parallelism is maintained in the sentence.

Parallelism With Correlative Conjunctions

- Correlative conjunctions are pairs of words that always go together. For the sentence to be correct, if one of a pair is present, the other should be present too.
- Examples of correlative conjunctions:
 - Not only...but also
 - No sooner...than
 - Either...or
 - Neither...nor
 - Both...and

Parallelism With Correlative Conjunctions

- **Note:** Only grammatically equal elements (noun & noun, adjective & adjective, phrase & phrase, clause & clause, etc.) are joined by correlative conjunctions. The elements joined by them have equal weight; none is subordinate to the other.
- Fill in the blank:
 - *Get either a red or _____ ball.*
 - Correlative conjunctions always join grammatically equal elements (here, phrases).
 - *Get either a red or a blue ball.*

Idioms With Built-in Parallel Structure

- A number of idioms are structured such that parallelism is demanded.
- Let 'X' and 'Y' be representative of two elements that must be parallel. These are among idioms demanding parallelism:
 - Between X and Y
 - Compared to X, Y
 - Not only X, but also Y
 - X acts as Y
 - As X, so Y

Parallelism – Ensuring that Each Element is ‘Complete’

- Ensure that each element is complete. Do not remove words that are important for expressing meaning and that guard against ambiguity.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *There are many references in the tale to the works of those who are canonical writers and who are not.*
 - “works of...who are not” does not make sense so the word “those” has to be added after “and”. The term “canonical writers”, however, is understood in the second element.
 - *There are many references in the tale to the works of those who are canonical writers and **those** who are not.*

Lists Connected by “And”

- A list containing two or more items is connected using “and”. The “and” is placed before the last item in the list.
 - a and b
 - a, b, c, and d
- On the GMAT, in lists containing three or more items, a comma is always inserted before the “and”.
 - Correct: a, b, and c
 - Incorrect: a, b and c
- A comma may be put before the “and” when this “and” is being used to link two clauses (recommended when the clauses are long, independent, or both).
 - *comma + “and”* is generally comparable to a semi-colon.

The place is close to my heart, and I often visit it.

The place is close to my heart; I often visit it.

Both the sentences are correct.

Lists Connected by “And”

- If the items in a list contain a number of words that themselves contain lists, a clear hierarchy needs to be created. If possible, lists should be rearranged such that the longest item is placed last.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *The decision was made after proper discussion, and weighing pros and cons and therefore, it is likely to turn out right.*
 - “proper discussion” is not parallel to “weighing pros and cons”. These items are also not parallel to “therefore, it is likely to turn out right”. Through repeating words and adding commas where necessary, a hierarchy needs to be created.
 - *The decision was made after proper discussion, and **after** weighing pros and cons, and therefore, it is likely to turn out right.*

Linking Verbs

- Linking verbs are verbs that express not the action of the subject, but what the subject is or what state the subject is in.
- Examples of commonly used linking verbs:
 - Forms of the verb “to be”- is, are, was, were, am, been, be, being
 - Other linking verbs- appear, become, seem, represent, resemble, feel, taste, sound, grow, look

Linking Verbs

- Linking verbs should be treated as parallel markers. The subject and the object must be made parallel.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *A river in the daytime is recreational.*
 - The two sides of the linking verb “is” should be structurally parallel.
 - *A river in the daytime is **a site for recreation.***

Linking Verbs

- Not just structural parallelism but parallelism in meaning of the elements on the two sides of the linking verb is essential.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *When selected to the post, Nita appears to be a pre-decided outcome to the members.*
 - The two sides of the linking verb “appears to be” – “Nita” and “a pre-decided outcome” – are not parallel in meaning. It is her *selection* that is a pre-decided outcome.
 - ***The selection of Nita to the post appears to be a pre-decided outcome to the members.***

Superficial Parallelism v/s Actual Parallelism

- Only grammatical structures that are logically parallel must be made structurally parallel.
- Correct the following sentence:
- *The nurse cared greatly for the old man, fed him, read to him, and helped him walk.*
 - In the given sentence, all the activities are provided equal emphasis. This sentence is only superficially parallel. The main verb is “cared” and the other verbs are only providing additional information about *how* the nurse cared. These other verbs should be parallel to each other, but not parallel to the main verb.
- *The nurse cared greatly for the old man, **feeding him, reading to him, and helping him walk.***

What to Make Parallel

- It is important to ascertain which elements need to be made parallel. Thus, paying attention to words and their use in the sentence is crucial.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *Alice went to the resort intending to get some respite from her hectic schedule, relaxing her strained self, and having some fun.*
 - Here, “intending to” is common to all the three elements so those three should be made parallel.
 - *Alice went to the resort intending to get some respite from her hectic schedule, **relax** her strained self, and **have** some fun.*

What to Make Parallel

- When a preposition such as “without” is placed before the first element of a series, it is assumed to be referring to each element of that series.
 - Correct the error in the following sentence:
 - *Early man survived winters without sweaters, coats, and only animal skins to keep him warm.*
 - Here, “without” is assumed to refer to all the elements of the series. The given sentence, therefore, means that early man survived winters without sweaters, without coats, and without animal skins.
 - *Early man survived winters without sweaters, without coats, and **with** only animal skins to keep him warm.*
- Or
- *Early man survived winters without sweaters and coats, and **with** only animal skins to keep him warm.*

Parallelism Special Cases

Parallelism Among Concrete and Action Nouns

- **Concrete Nouns** refer to people, animals, things, places, events, or time periods.
 - Some examples of concrete nouns- boy, dog, chair, mountain, holiday, year.
- **Action Nouns** refer to actions and are often derived from verbs.
 - Some examples of action nouns- development, growth, pollution, inspection, arrival, belief.

Parallelism Among Simple and Complex Gerund Phrases

- Gerunds, formed by adding *-ing* to basic forms of verbs, can be used as nouns to indicate actions. There are two types of Gerund phrases- Simple and Complex.
- **Simple Gerund Phrases:** These phrases function like nouns but the words are arranged as if following a verb. This gerund phrase can be included in a working verb phrase.
 - *Digitizing maps properly is essential for this project.*
 - The phrase “Digitizing maps properly” functions as a noun (a concrete noun can be substituted in its place). It can be included in a working verb phrase: ‘
 - *We are digitizing maps properly.*

Parallelism Among Simple and Complex Gerund Phrases

- **Complex Gerund Phrases:** These are nouns- in their function and in that they are often preceded by articles or adjectives. The object is placed either in an 'of'-prepositional phrase or before the *-ing* form.
- *The proper digitizing of maps is essential for this project.*
 - “proper” is the adjective here. “maps” is put in an 'of'-prepositional phrase.
 - “digitizing of maps” is a complex gerund phrase here.

Parallelism Among Simple and Complex Gerund Phrases

- Correct the following sentence:

- *Kate loves visiting the Church and the hymn singing.*

- Since “visiting the Church” is a simple gerund phrase and “the hymn singing” is a complex one, they cannot be made parallel.

- *Kate loves visiting the Church and singing the hymn.*

- Correct the following sentence:

- *For Tim, the promise of a job meant the giving of hope.*

- “the promise of a job” is not parallel to “the giving of hope”.

- *For Tim, the promise of a job meant the gift of hope.*

Parallelism Among Action Nouns and Complex Gerund Phrases

- Only complex gerund phrases can be parallel to action nouns. When a number of action nouns are present in a sentence, a simple gerund phrase might be mistaken for something other than a noun. A complex gerund phrase must be chosen over a simple gerund phrase. If a simple gerund phrase is present, it should be replaced by a complex one.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *Sitting near the harbor, the crew observed the arrival of ships, the inspection of the cargo, and unloading the shipment.*
 - “arrival” and “inspection” are action nouns. Therefore, a complex gerund phrase- “the unloading of”- should be used.
 - *Sitting near the harbor, the crew observed the arrival of ships, the inspection of the cargo, and **the unloading of the shipment.***

Parallelism Among Action Nouns and Complex Gerund Phrases

- Do not create a complex gerund phrase if there already is a suitable action noun for the verb in question. Rather, use the action noun. The sentence shall sound better with the action noun than with the complex gerund phrase.
- Correct the following sentence:
 - *The NGO is committed to the creation of job opportunities for the unemployed youth and developing slum areas.*
 - The correct usage is “the development of” and not “the developing of”. “Development” is an action noun meaning “the act of developing”. Hence, “the development of slum areas” is a better replacement than “the developing of slum areas”.
 - *The NGO is committed to the creation of job opportunities for the unemployed youth and **the development of slum areas.***

thank you



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