

# Parallelism

## What is Parallelism?

Parallelism is when closely related parts of a sentence fit together using similar grammatical form. It makes writing clearer and easier for the reader to understand

### In a List

When writing a series of items in a list, be sure that all of your items are in the same form. Read the incorrect sentence below:

*Learning a second language can be helpful for improving your job, to understand another culture, and communication skills.*

This is incorrect because the items in the series are uneven which make it a difficult sentence to follow. By using the coordinator “and” we are stating that all items in the series are equal. All items must be in the same grammatical form and follow the same grammatical pattern to keep the sentence balanced and easy to understand.

Here are a few ways that we can change the items in the list in order to make the sentence correct.

#### **Change all items to nouns**

*Learning a second language can be helpful for employment, cultural knowledge, and communication skills.*

#### **Change all items to present participles ending in “-ing”**

*Learning a second language can be helpful for improving your job, understanding another culture, and gaining better communication skills.*

#### **Change all items to infinitives beginning with “to”**

*Learning a second language can help you to improve your job, to understand another culture, and to communicate better.*

Two of the items in the list include a descriptor. We can either **remove the descriptors** OR **add descriptors** to all of the items.

### **Example:**

**First version:** *Learning a second language can be helpful for lucrative employment, cultural knowledge, and communication skills.*

**Altered version:** *Learning a second language can help to improve employment, knowledge, and communication.*

Remember to check for consistency among descriptions of items as well.

## **Contrasts**

When writing about word groups that are paired by using contrast or another relationship make sure the items you are talking about are parallel. Look at the following incorrect sentences. These sentences demonstrate weak relationships between the items and can be fixed by making the items parallel.

### **Example 1:**

*I thought I would lose money on the investment, but instead money was made.*

Instead, make both items “I” statements; Use “some” to refer to “money”.

*I thought I would lose money on the investment, but instead I made some.*

### **Example 2:**

*The disadvantages of winter are that you can't go to the pool to swim or go biking on the trails.*

Instead, change both to present participles ending with “-ing”

*The disadvantages of winter are that you can't go swimming at the pool or biking on the trails.*

# Comparisons

Parallel form is also necessary when making comparisons. Without it we can create faulty comparisons that can change the meaning of the sentence. Look at how we can change the following incorrect comparison to make more sense and convey a clearer meaning.

## Example 1:

*The voice of a twenty-year-old is usually lower than a ten-year-old.*

A voice is lower than an entire child. Make the nouns possessive to speak only about the voice.

*A twenty-year-old's voice is usually lower than a ten-year-old's.*

## Example 2:

*Peas can cook faster in a microwave than a pot.*

The peas have the ability to cook faster than a pot. Add a preposition to change what is being compared.

*Peas can cook faster in a microwave than in a pot.*