

# Revising for Parallelism

## Understanding Parallelism

Words and groups of words that have the same function in a sentence and that also have the same form are said to be **parallel**.  
The poems are **lyrical, imaginative, and brilliant**.

The three highlighted words in this sentence are parallel because they have the same **function** (to describe the poems) and the same **form** (adjective).

When words or groups of words that have the same function in a sentence are not parallel, the sentence is awkward. Notice the lack of parallelism in the draft below.

### STUDENT MODEL

#### DRAFT

When Alice Walker writes poetry, she locks herself in her study, writes lines and lines and lines, and then will put them away for a long time.

Two verbs in the present tense, one verb in the future tense

#### REVISION

When Alice Walker writes poetry, she locks herself in her study, writes lines and lines and lines, and then puts them away for a long time.

Three verbs in the present tense



Alice Walker

Errors in parallelism are found with clauses and phrases, as well as with individual words.

### STUDENT MODEL

#### DRAFT

Ray Bradbury says you can live on very little money by giving up new clothes, staying home from the movies, and you can eat inexpensive foods like macaroni and cheese.

Two phrases and a clause

#### REVISION

Ray Bradbury says you can live on very little money by giving up new clothes, staying home from the movies, and eating inexpensive foods like macaroni and cheese.

Three phrases

STUDENT MODEL

DRAFT

Isaac Asimov wrote science fiction, humor, and for adults.

Two nouns and a phrase

REVISION

Isaac Asimov wrote science fiction and humor for adults.

Two nouns

DRAFT

Every writer needs a good idea and to be left alone.

A noun and an infinitive

REVISION

Every writer needs a good idea and time alone.

Two nouns

## 2 Creating Parallelism

As you revise, look for sentence parts that lack parallelism and correct them. You can use the following techniques to correct these errors.

### Here's How Correcting Parallelism Errors

1. Look for sentence parts that have the same function.
2. Determine whether the sentence parts have the same form.
  - Do they share the same part of speech?
  - If they are verbs, are they in the same tense?
3. Revise the sentence parts so that they are in the correct form.

NOT TIP



Reading your sentences aloud will help you find errors in parallelism.

### PRACTICE Correcting Parallelism Errors

Find the errors in parallelism in the sentences below. Rewrite each sentence, making sentence parts parallel.

1. Jenny loves playing the saxophone and to read about ancient China.
2. I'll spend tonight sitting by the fire, listening to music, and write letters.
3. Dimitri ran for class president and feels confident about winning the race.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Parallel Structure – Exercise 4

This handout accompanies Exercise 4 of *Grammar Bytes!* Get the answers by doing the interactive version of the exercise at this address: <http://chompchomp.com/exercises.htm>

**Directions:** Choose the option that maintains parallel structure in the sentence.

1. Ironing a clean shirt, \_\_\_\_\_, and buying a pack of gum for fresh breath were the tasks Aaron completed before the first day of spring semester.
  - A. the printout of a course schedule
  - B. printing a course schedule
  - C. making sure that he had printed a course schedule
  
2. Stuart wiggled his foot, drummed a Jimi Hendrix riff with his pencil, and \_\_\_\_\_, but he could not burn off the caffeine-induced energy from an extra large cup of coffee.
  - A. chewed a mouthful of gum
  - B. was chewing a mouthful of gum
  - C. his jaw worked a mouthful of gum
  
3. The blonde who sucked the ends of her hair, the athlete who blinked nervously, and \_\_\_\_\_ would not share their algebra homework with Jake.
  - A. the rebel slouching in his seat
  - B. the slouching rebel
  - C. the rebel who slouched in his seat
  
4. \_\_\_\_\_, no recognition for her skills, and a dislike for the polyester uniform made Kelsey quit the ping-pong team.
  - A. Because she was frustrated with the coach
  - B. Frustration with the coach
  - C. Having become frustrated with the coach
  
5. The hike through the canyon exhausted Kim. The steep incline made her thigh muscles throb, \_\_\_\_\_, and the relentless sun burned her skin.
  - A. the heavy pack caused her shoulders to ache
  - B. aching shoulders from the heavy pack
  - C. shoulders that ached from the heavy pack
  
6. Instead of finishing her chemistry homework, Terry wanted to spend her birthday money at the mall, \_\_\_\_\_, and eat pizza in the food court.
  - A. see a movie at the theater
  - B. she planned to see a movie at the theater
  - C. planning to see a movie at the theater

7. Because Alex is always flirting with Becky, Bridgette will neither lend him an eraser nor \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. will she let him peek at her score sheet
  - B. let him peek at her score sheet
  - C. agreeing to let him peek at her score sheet
8. Mrs. Martin, the hiring manager, explained that she would consider an interview if Lester remembered to wear shoes, comb the crumbs out of his beard, and \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. replace the shark-tooth necklace with a tie
  - B. he needed a tie, not a shark-tooth necklace
  - C. she wanted to see a tie, not a shark-tooth necklace, around his throat
9. After no rabbit popped out of the hat, Lori decided she had neither the patience nor \_\_\_\_\_ to tolerate another of Darren's poorly performed magic tricks.
- A. the good humor
  - B. did she have the good humor
  - C. the ability to muster the good humor
10. Elizabeth wanted to enjoy the plate of nachos that she and Jared shared, but she worried about black beans sticking to her teeth, cheese dripping from her chin, and \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. the possibility that chip crumbs might catapult from her mouth
  - B. whether or not chip crumbs would catapult from her mouth
  - C. chip crumbs catapulting from her mouth
11. Neither the carrots rotting in the bottom bin nor \_\_\_\_\_ will make a suitable side for the chicken you are planning to bake for dinner.
- A. the broccoli that is crusting over with freezer burn
  - B. the broccoli which has crusted with freezer burn
  - C. the broccoli crusted with freezer burn
12. Horatio tickled the pads of Samson's feet, blew in his ears, and \_\_\_\_\_, but the ancient German shepherd refused to leave the sofa for a walk in the rain.
- A. she removed dog hair from the sofa cushions
  - B. removing dog hair from the sofa cushions
  - C. removed dog hair from the sofa cushions
13. While sitting in English class, Peterson wonders how Dr. Jones can speak so passionately about comma splices, why she would spend her free evenings voluntarily reading Shakespeare, and \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. when she manages to have some real fun
  - B. does she ever have some real fun
  - C. ever having any real fun