

Parallelism

Parallelism means **using the same (= parallel) grammatical structures** (words, phrases, clauses) in two or more parts of a sentence in order to give the sentence a definite, readily recognizable pattern, elegance, and rhythm. In other words, verbs should not be mixed with nouns, nouns with –ing forms or adjectives, imperatives with other verb forms, active voice with passive voice, “that” clauses with other structures, etc. Non-parallel structures may be grammatically correct in themselves; they do, however, make reading and understanding the text more difficult. Sentences containing such structures simply do not read well.

Examples:

Wrong

*The lab was spacious, light, and **it was also well equipped.***

*A manager should have the following qualities: leadership, responsibility, and **he must be able** to organize and communicate.*

*Getting young people into engineering is a challenge, and **to keep** them there is another.*

Right

*The lab was spacious, light, and **well equipped.***
(verb + a series of adjectives)

*A manager should have the following qualities: leadership, responsibility, and **ability** to organize and communicate.*
(a series of three nouns)

*Getting young people into engineering is a challenge, and **keeping** them there is another.*
(a series of –ing forms)

EXERCISES

I. Underline the parallel structures in the following text:

One of the purposes of this course is to show you that there are differences between academic and general English. You should learn to recognize these differences and to understand that what may be acceptable in speaking may not be appropriate in writing a paper/report/ thesis/project/formal letter, and application. Also, jumping from informal English_(i.e. using colloquial expressions like “stuff” instead of “material/things”, or “he’s” instead of “he is”) to academic English is wrong.

II. Underline the parallel structures in the following sentences and say in what grammatical forms they are:

1. We must either get control of overspending or lose control of the economy.

Grammatical forms:

2. We need to develop renewable energy sources, provide clean water, and dispose of our mountains of waste.

Grammatical forms:

3. In the past, people generally believed that the Earth was flat and that one could fall off its

edge.

Grammatical forms:

4. Tutors can force their students to attend a class but not to think.

Grammatical forms:

5. My supervisor advised me to write a paper on my research, submit it to a journal, or present it at a conference.

Grammatical forms:

6. We do not know yet how the project will be funded and who will manage it.

Grammatical forms:

7. To me, it seems that reading English texts in my field is easier than reading novels and short stories.

Grammatical forms:

8. Professor Kinsey, whom they met at the conference and who is expected to visit our University soon, is a specialist in power electronics.

Grammatical forms:

9. First, the data were collected, then they were sorted and analysed.

Grammatical forms:

10. He is good at maths but bad at the engineering subjects.

Grammatical forms:

III. Which of the two sentences forming a pair uses parallel structures?

1.

a) My English conversation class is made up of Frenchmen, Spaniards, and some are from Italy.

b) My English conversation class is made up of Frenchmen, Spaniards, and Italians.

2.

a) The teacher wanted to know which country we came from and our future goals.

b) The teacher wanted to know which country we came from and what our future goals were.

3.

a) The language skills of the students in the part-time courses are often not as good as the language skills/those of the students in the full-time courses.

b) The language skills of the students in the part-time courses are often not as good as the students in the full-time courses.

4.

a) Experiments done in a careless way have a high probability of error, and even of failing completely.

b) Experiments done in a careless way have a high probability of error and even of complete failure.

5.

a) Introducing tuition fees at a time of economic crisis is denying some students access to higher education.

b) Introducing tuition fees at a time of economic crisis is to deny some students access to higher education.

6.

a) John is a bright, responsible student, and he also works hard.

b) John is a bright, responsible, and (also) hard-working student.

7.

- a) The more I read the book, the greater my confusion.
- b) The more I read the book, the more confused I am.

8.

- a) Some young people cannot decide whether they should go to university right after secondary school or spend a year travelling and gaining experience first.
- b) Some young people cannot decide whether they should go to university right after secondary school or to spend a year travelling and gaining experience first.

9.

- a) Formerly, languages were taught by the grammatical method; now they are taught by the communicative method.
- b) Formerly, languages were taught by the grammatical method, now teachers use the communicative method.

10.

- a) The student is very talented but he lacks self-discipline.
- b) The student is very talented but undisciplined.

IV. Correct the following sentences, using parallel structures.

1. Our experience is different from our partners in the project.
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2. People's ways of thinking, doing things, and the way they formulate their ideas are influenced by the environment they live in.
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3. In the student competition, his paper was awarded the 1st prize for the novel approach to the problem, applicability of the results in practice, and because it was written in very good English.
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4. Politicians in Germany have responded to the shortage of engineers with the following measures: changes in immigration laws, salary rise, and offering programmes to attract engineers from abroad.
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5. He expected that he would describe his programme at the workshop, that he would have time to demonstrate it, and that lots of questions would be asked by prospective users.
.....
.....

6. A device of this kind is simple to design, easy to operate, but it is expensive to produce.
.....

7. In that project, there is money for researchers' salaries but not equipment.
.....

8. He told us what method he used, how he used it, and explained his reasons for using it.
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9. After graduation he wants either to work at the University or in a research institute.
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10. His paper was very informative, well structured, and it was also written in good English.

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11. This is not a time for long discussions but actions.
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- 12. She was awarded the Dean’s prize for the organization of a workshop and for presenting an excellent paper at an international conference.
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- 13. There’s nothing I like better than reading, playing the guitar, and to spend my weekends hiking in the mountains.
.....
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- 14. Preparation for writing a paper includes searching the literature, choice of a suitable method, and plans of the experiments.
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- 15. Papers written by students with a poor knowledge of English are often difficult to understand not because the choice of words is wrong, but because of faulty sentence structure.
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- 16. He hoped that the conference participants would understand his English, would find his presentation interesting, and that he would not be asked any difficult questions.
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- 17. The examiner wants the students to answer his questions quickly, accurately, and in a concise manner.
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- 18. We must either raise taxes, or it will be necessary to reduce social benefits.
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- 19. The average salary of a teacher is much lower than a doctor.
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- 20. That experiment was time-consuming and it was also expensive.
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- 21. Smoking cigarettes is as dangerous as to drive recklessly.
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- 22. The thesis is to be written in Czech, is not to be longer than 60 pages, the last day for handing it in is May 31st, and it must be submitted in three copies.
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.....
- 23. You can improve your English if you read English books, watch British or American films, and by spending some time abroad.
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V. Combine each group of sentences by using parallel structures. In some cases, you

may have to change the wording as well.

1.
The summer was at an end.
The long vacations as well.
Another academic year was about to begin.

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2.
At this meeting you will learn everything about electric vehicles.
Information on related services will also be provided.

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3.
First read the instructions.
You should understand them.
Then do the experiment.

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4.
They found the lecture long and boring.
They had difficulty understanding it.

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5.
Success in an examination depends on the students' knowledge of their field and ability to
formulate clearly their answers.
To some extent, good luck plays a role, too.

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6.
The supervisor was not satisfied with one of his PhD students because he wrote very poor
annual reports, kept postponing his examinations, and his motivation was low.

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**VI. Tell the students in the Bachelor degree course you teach how to write the Abstract.
Use the information below and add adverbs signalling the order of the Abstract parts.**

First, the author presents the objective of the work. This is followed by the description of the
method. Afterwards he/she states the results. Conclusions are drawn in the last part.

First,
.....,
.....,
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