UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH WRITNG & READING CENTER

**PARALLELISM**

Parallel structure makes writing clearer by joining similar ideas together using similar grammatical form.

Awkward: Sam is tall, with blues eyes, **and** is considerate.

Parallel: Sam is tall, blue eyed, **and** considerate.

I. Words, phrases, and clauses in parallel structure follow the same pattern by balancing a word with a word, a phrase with a phrase, and a clause with a clause.

**A.** **Words**

Awkward: Let us remember his love **and** that he was kind.

Parallel: Let us remember his love **and** his kindness.

Awkward: In the summer Robert likes reading, cooking, **and** to hike.

Parallel: Robert likes reading, cooking, **and** hiking.

OR

Parallel: Robert likes to read, to cook, **and** to hike.

**B. Phrases**

Awkward: She was **not only** pretty **but also** knew how to dress well.

Parallel: She was **not only** pretty **but also** well dressed.

**C. Clauses**

Awkward: What we say **and** the things we do seem discordant.

Parallel: What we say **and** what we do seem discordant.

II. Correlative conjunctions use parallel structure. Some common correlative conjunctions are **either…or, neither…nor, both…and, not only…but also, whether…or, and not…but.**

Awkward: He was **not only** kind **but also** helped people.

Parallel: He was **not only** kind **but also** helpful.

III. Repeat prepositions and articles to make parallel structure clear.

Awkward: I admire Tennyson **for** the ideals in his poems **but not** his style.

Parallel: I admire Tennyson **for** the ideals in his poems **but not for** his style.

IV. Do not use "and who" or "and which" clauses in a sentence unless you have already used a parallel "who" or "which" clause.

Awkward: We met Abe Fulton, a brilliant biologist, **and who** is also an excellent pianist.

Parallel: We met Abe Fulton, **who** is a brilliant biologist, **and who** is also an excellent pianist.

PARALLELISM EXERCISES 1

In the blank to the right, put "P" for each sentence with correct parallel structure and "X" for each sentence without it.

1. American history is an interesting course and which is also valuable. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. American history is an interesting and valuable course. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. American history is a course which is interesting and also valuable. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. He was a qualified director with executive ability, a capacity for friendship, and

having a college education. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. He was a qualified director with executive ability, displaying a capacity for friendship, and

a college education. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. He was a qualified director with executive ability, a capacity for friendship, and

a college education. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

7. I was so anxious to go to college that I worked all summer, applied for scholarships

at six colleges, and even borrowed money. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8. I was so anxious to go to college that I worked all summer, applied for scholarships

at six colleges, and had to borrow money. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

9. I was so anxious to go to college that I worked all summer, applying for scholarships

at six colleges, and even borrowed money. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

10. I took the course for both the interesting subject matter and the teacher. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

11. I took the course not only for the interesting subject matter but also for the

teacher. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

12. To play tennis, watching football, and participation in card games are my favorite

pastimes. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

13. My grade school not only offered the three R's but also was generous with drawing

and music courses. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

14. Not only does his scholarship pay his expenses, but also it provides him with

some spending money. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

15. Neither the weather nor how hard I am working in school will keep me from going

to the final game. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

16. A history book with a table of contents and having a good index can be a very

useful tool. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

ANSWERS

1. X 5. X 9. X 13. P

2. P 6. P 10. P 14. P

3. P 7. P 11. P 15. X

4. X 8. X 12. X 16. X

PARALLELISM EXERCISES 2

Revise the following sentences by using parallel structure. Some of the sentences are correct.

1. He was both intelligent as well as courteous.

2. Either Congress will repeal the law or the Supreme Court will declare it unconstitutional.

3. Hemingway was both a good writer and he influenced other writers.

4. The biography of Franklin is interesting, lively and also an informative piece of writing.

5. Mary has a full-time job, is a member of the school committee, and attending graduate school.

6. The student was told to obtain a transcript of his grades and that then he could apply for admission.

7. To be a good teacher, one must have patience, liking to help others, and to show an infinite capacity for learning.

8. The policeman told us to drive very slowly and that we should not put on our high-beams.

9. The short story was exciting, powerful, and could be easily understood.

10. Marcia moved to a new apartment with more space and having air conditioning.

11. He likes fishing, to swim, and rowing.

12. To love is to be provoked, disappointing, and rewarded.

13. He wanted not only to excel in his studies but in athletics.

14. She was both beautiful and who had a pleasing personality.

15. Either he is a fool or a genius.

16. Paul is funny, with brown eyes, and is friendly.

ANSWERS

(answers may vary)

1. He was both intelligent and courteous.

2. Correct

3. Hemingway was a good writer and an influence on other aspiring writers.

4. The biography of Franklin is interesting, lively, and informative.

5. Mary has a full-time job, is a member of the school committee, and attends graduate school.

6. The student was told to obtain a transcript of his grades and to apply for admission.

7. To be a good teacher, one must have patience, like to help others, and show an infinite capacity for learning.

8. The policeman told us to drive very slowly and not to put on our high-beams.

9. The short story was exciting, powerful, and easily understood.

10. Marcia moved to a new apartment with more space and with air conditioning.

11. He likes fishing, swimming, and rowing.

12. To love is to be provoked, disappointed, and rewarded.

13. He wanted to excel not only in his studies but also in his athletics.

14. She had both beauty and a pleasing personality.

15. Correct

16. Paul is funny, brown-eyed, and friendly.