



PARALLEL STRUCTURE

Parallel structure is another way of saying “keep everything in the same grammatical form.” You will often encounter the need for parallel structure when using a list of items or actions or when using headings. This is not as difficult as it may sound because you can use your own writing to determine how to make a passage parallel. Consider the following sentence lacking parallel structure:

Running, swimming, and to dance are all good forms of aerobic exercise.

The previous sentence is not parallel because the first two items in the list end in -ing, and the third is missing that ending. Since these are all related items, they should all have an -ing ending:

Running, swimming, and dancing are all good forms of aerobic exercise.

Sometimes a problem with parallel structure might be more difficult to detect:

He left the store, stomped out to his car, and away he drove.

This sentence may sound fine, but it does not have parallel structure. This sentence is set up so that everything set off by a comma refers back to the word “he.” The phrase “he left the store” makes perfect sense, as does “he stomped out to his car.” The third part of the sentence, however, does not make sense when it follows this same pattern: “and away he drove.”

Often when a list lacks in parallel structure, the problem occurs with the portion after the word “and.” The third part, then, should be changed so it will be parallel with the rest of the sentence:

He left the store, stomped out to his car, and drove away.