

## Parallel construction

In lists and sentence structure, use consistent:

- grammatical construction
- verb tense
- language
- voice

Parallelism gives lists and sentence structure flow. It can create a rhythm, emphasis and drama as it clearly presents ideas or action.

### Use parallel structure with verb forms:

**Original:** A reporter's typical day might consist of meetings with editors, interviews with sources and writing stories.

**Edited:** A reporter's typical day might consist of talking to editors, interviewing sources and writing stories.

**Original:** The qualities of a good reporter include a curiosity about the world, writing well, a keen sense of observation, and asking insightful questions.

**Edited:** The qualities of a good reporter include a curiosity about the world, a keen sense of observation, the ability to write well, and the insight to ask probing questions.

### Other wording in the sentence should also use parallel structure:

**original:** Zoo officials said Friday that the pandas were adjusting well to their new habitat and the public would be allowed to visit the exhibit in about two weeks.

**edited:** Zoo officials said Friday that the pandas were adjusting well to their new habitat and that the public would be allowed to visit the exhibit in about two weeks.

USA Times 6Jan08

The storms have been blamed for at least three deaths, and hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses in California, Oregon and Washington were without power Saturday.

edited:

The storms have been blamed for at least three deaths and for power outages in hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses in California, Oregon and Washington on Saturday.

The first sentence of a magazine article on sneakers:

A long time ago – before sneaker companies had the marketing clout to spend millions of dollars sponsoring telecasts of the Super Bowl; before street gangs identified themselves by the color of their Adidas; before North Carolina State's basketball players found they could raise a little extra cash by selling the freebie Nikes off their feet; and before a sneaker's very sole had been gelatinized, Energized, Hexalited, torsioned and injected with pressurized gas – sneakers were, well, sneakers.

From a story about a women's basketball coach:

Back and forth she paces in front of the players' bench, four long strikes right, four long strides left, spine like a ruler, shoulders squared, eyes riveted to the court.

## Parallel structure exercise

### Parallel structure

*Which of the following pairs of sentences has the better parallel construction:*

1. a. My cousin picks the berries, boxes them and sells them to the markets.
- b. My cousin picks the berries, boxes them, and he sells them to the markets.
- a. My cousin picks the berries, boxes them and sells them to the markets.

2. a. The car's cost is not as important to me as how it handles.
- b. How much the car costs is not as important to me as how it handles.
- b. How much the car costs is not as important to me as how it handles.

3. a. The president said he is commander and chief and that he takes responsibility for the war's the high casualty rate.
- b. The president said he is commander and chief and he is responsible for war's the high casualty rate.
- b. The president said he is commander and chief and he is responsible for war's the high casualty rate.

4. a. She is an expert on caring for trees, indoor plants and how to maintain a good lawn.
- b. She is an expert on caring for trees, indoor plants and lawns.
- b. She is an expert on caring for trees, indoor plants and lawns.

5. a. Neither what he said nor how he said it matters to me.
- b. Neither his comments nor how he made them matters to me.
- a. Neither what he said nor how he said it matters to me.

6. a. She has a Saint Bernard that refuses to be house-trained, yet she has a doctorate in animal psychology.
- b. She has a Saint Bernard that refuses to be house-trained yet has a doctorate in animal psychology.
- a. She has a Saint Bernard that refuses to be house-trained, yet she has a doctorate in animal psychology.

7. a. To take bribes is no worse than offering them in the first place.
- b. Taking bribes is no worse than offering them in the first place.
- b. Taking bribes is no worse than offering them in the first place.

8. a. Norman either wants something or he has had a personality change.
- b. Either Norman wants something or he has had a personality change.
- b. Either Norman wants something or he has had a personality change.

9. a. It was time to bear down and win the next point.  
b. It was time to bear down and for winning the next point.
- a. It was time to bear down and win the next point.

10. a. Not only was the cat vicious, but it was also ugly.  
b. The cat was not only vicious, but it was also ugly.
- b. The cat was not only vicious, but it was also ugly.