

**Use parallel construction for Coordination and Balance**

Words and phrases are coordinated by using the coordinating conjunctions and, but, or, nor, for, yet.

He was poor but happy.

The decor of the lobby was rich, yet unobtrusive.

Clauses are coordinated by joining them with a coordinating conjunction or a semicolon. Ideas of equal importance are given equal prominence by coordination. The elements to be coordinated are given increased emphasis if they are balanced: presented in approximately the same number of words, the same kind of words, and in identical or closely similar word order.

He gained great wealth, but he lost his honor.

To err is human; to forgive, divine.

The man was the hunter; the woman was the cook.

She'll come willingly, or she won't come at all.

Balance also gives effectiveness to simple assertions:

Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Over the fence is out of bounds.

Two or more ideas which are similar in nature are known as parallel ideas. For effective presentation, express them in parallel form: a noun should be paralleled with a noun, an infinitive with an infinitive, a subordinate clause with another subordinate clause, etc.

PARALLEL      They studied history, mathematics, and chemistry.  
NOUNS

NOT              They studied about the past, mathematics, and how matter is  
PARALLEL      constituted.

PARALLEL      He learned to swim, to play tennis, and to ride a horse.  
INFINITIVES

NOT              He learned to play tennis, swimming, and the art of horseback  
PARALLEL      riding.

PARALLEL      In her praises of the summer camp, she mentioned that the food  
CLAUSES      was good, that the climate was perfect, and that the equipment  
was superb.

NOT              In her praises of the summer camp, she mentioned the good food,  
PARALLEL      that the climate was perfect, and what superb equipment they had.

PARALLEL    The old house was battered by the rain and bleached by the sun.  
PARTICIPLES

NOT    The old house was battered by the rain and there was no color left  
PARALLEL    because it was standing in the sunlight.

If possible, balance parallel ideas by expressing them in approximately the same number of words, the same kind of words, and in identical or closely similar word order.

NEITHER PARALLEL    He was a good merchant, but was very poor at keeping  
NOR BALANCED    books.

PARALLEL AND    He was a good merchant, but a poor bookkeeper.  
BALANCED

NEITHER PARALLEL    He believed in democracy for the upper classes, but felt that  
NOR BALANCED    the common people should be ruled by their superiors.

PARALLEL AND    He believed in democracy for the classes, but autocracy for  
BALANCED    the masses.

PARALLEL AND    It is wiser to invest than to squander, to seek out friends than  
BALANCED    to collect acquaintances, to treasure life than to throw it  
away.

Notice how parallelism, balance, and repetition are combined in the following celebrated passage from I Corinthians 13:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

**EXERCISE 1. Improve the following sentences by putting parallel ideas into the same grammatical form. Correct any errors in the placement of correlatives and in the omission of a necessary article, preposition, or pronoun.**

- 1) Its large size, simple structure, and how readily available it is, make the common cockroach convenient to study.
- 2) Cockroaches have smooth leathery skin, long thin antennae, and they have a body that is thick and flat.
- 3) They are not only found in urban areas but tropical.
- 4) The Oriental cockroach is short-winged, while cockroaches from America have full wings.
- 5) North America boasts about sixty species, but only two in Great Britain.
- 6) Cockroaches may be dark brown, pale brown, or of a green color that is delicate.
- 7) Cockroach eggs are laid in small cases, carried on the female body, and then they deposit them in hidden crevices.
- 8) A typical cockroach lives as a nymph for about a year, and as an adult its life lasts about half a year.
- 9) The odors that attract cockroaches are sweet, but they emit disagreeable odors.
- 10) Cockroaches are omnivorous, but they especially like sweet foods and foods that are starchy.
- 11) What a cockroach soils is far more than it consumes.
- 12) By day the average cockroach is quietly lazy, but busily energetic describes how it is by night.

- 13) We might not only view the cockroach with disgust but also interest.
- 14) The cockroach both is the most primitive living winged insect and the most ancient fossil insect.
- 15) We have as much to learn from the cockroach's evolution as there is to gain from extinguishing it.

**EXERCISE 2. Correct the parallelism in each of the following sentences by inserting the words that have been omitted.**

- 1) My experience was not half so exciting as the people who didn't get home until dawn.
- 2) As time passed, she was torn between her love for her parents and her husband.
- 3) This author's style is not much different from other writers of this time.
- 4) Highway signs in Europe employ symbols much more than the United States.
- 5) Compare your grades for this quarter with last quarter.
- 6) Statistics prove that prices this year are lower than last year.
- 7) You will find the information in the second edition more up-to-date than the first edition.
- 8) Little children are more trouble in the boat than the beach.
- 9) The trail on the north side of the mountain is steeper than the south side.
- 10) The amount of money his wife received in the will was much smaller than the children.

- 11) The classrooms on the second floor are always cleaner than the first floor.
- 12) The inexpensive overcoat which I bought last week looks exactly like the more expensive stores.
- 13) Cats can catch rabbits as easily as dogs.
- 14) The damage done by this year's forest fires was greater than last year's.
- 15) The reaction of the students to the new regulations was more violent than the faculty.

**EXERCISE 3. Correct the parallelism in each of the following sentences by inserting the words that have been omitted.**

1. The article was short, informative, and reading it was easy.
2. The article was short, informative, and easy to read.
3. Many people prefer an honest idiot to a genius who is not honest.
4. The order of business will be as follows:
5. Calling the meeting to order
6. Rollcall
7. The committees will report.
8. New business
9. A date should be set for the next meeting.
10. You don't have to be raised on a farm to be able to tell the difference between a young rooster and a female chicken that has reached old age.
11. Reading letters is a pleasure, but to write them is something few people enjoy doing.

12. When you have swept the floor and the furniture is dusted, let me know.
13. He took the job because he needed to earn some money and experience would be useful to him.
14. He was fired because he was not interested in the job, the boss didn't like him, and laziness.
15. He took his bicycle to the repair shop to get the brake adjusted, and the headlight didn't work very well.
16. The shape of the rock, how big it was, and its color reminded me of a small elephant.
17. Chia, my dog, is overweight and moves clumsily.
18. Your job consists of arranging the books, cataloguing new arrivals, and the pamphlets have to be alphabetized.
19. A thin film of frost coated the trees. The hedges and shrubs had it also.
20. He is an affectionate husband, a thoughtful son, and kind to his kids.
21. He is a poet of great talent and who is insightful.
22. Every afternoon in the mountains, it either rains or there is hail.

23. His writing reveals not only intelligence but also it is humorous.

24. Marvin was happy to win the bowling tournament, and he also felt surprised.

25. The ideal student is attentive, studious, and asks questions.