



# Dirty Dozen Workshop 6

## Parallel Structure

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# Which sentence is correct?

Our class discussion was engaging, informative, and interesting.

~ OR ~

Our class discussion was engaging, informative, and should have been longer.



Our class discussion was engaging, informative, and interesting.

Our class discussion was engaging, informative, and should have been longer.

**INCORRECT**

Parallel structure refers to the pattern within a sentence.

**Why?**

In sentence one, *engaging*, *informative*, and *interesting* are adjectives, so the sentence is **parallel**.

In sentence two, *engaging* and *informative* are both adjectives, but *should have been longer* is a phrase, so the pattern is broken, and the sentence is **not parallel**.

# Parallel Structure (//)

**Parallelism** means that items that form a pair (two items) or items that form a series (more than two items) have the same grammatical structure (are worded the same way).

**Lack of parallel structure** occurs when parts of a sentence should be in parallel grammatical structure (should be worded the same way) but are not.

# **Parallel Structure Error Example**

**Of all desserts, I prefer cake,  
pie, and dipping strawberries  
in chocolate.**

# Parallel Structure

## Error Example

**Correct:** Of all desserts, I prefer cake, pie, and chocolate-dipped strawberries.



**Why?** In the first example, *cake* and *pie* are nouns but *dipping strawberries in chocolate* is a phrase, so the sentence is **not parallel**.

In the second example, the three words *cake*, *pie*, and *strawberries* are all nouns, so the sentence is **parallel**. (*Chocolate-dipped* modifies the noun *strawberries*.)

# **Parallel Structure Error Example**

**My dog is the best pet because she knows many tricks, she listens to me, and is pretty.**

# Parallel Structure Error Example

**Correct:** My dog is the best pet because she knows many tricks, she listens to me, and she is pretty.



**Why?** In the first sentence, *she knows tricks* and *she listens to* are independent clauses, but *is pretty* is not; therefore, the sentence is **not parallel**.

In the second *she knows many tricks, she listens to me, and she is pretty* are all independent clauses, so the overall sentence is **parallel**.



# Parallel Structure Error Example

**The best way to impress a woman is to make eye contact, ask her questions about her interests, and to tell funny jokes.**

# Parallel Structure Error Example

**Correct:** The best way to impress a woman is to make eye contact, to ask her questions about her interests, and to tell funny jokes.



**Also correct:** The best way to impress a woman is to make eye contact, ask her questions about her interests, and tell funny jokes.

**Why?** In the first sentence, *to* is used before the first and third phrases, but not before the second phrase, so the sentence is **not parallel**.

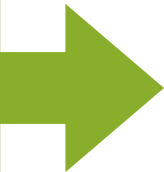
In the second and third sentences, *to* is either repeated in each phrase or used only before the first. Therefore, both sentences are **parallel**.

# Checking for Parallel Structure

**Use parallelism whenever your writing includes:**

1. Linking by coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).
2. Linking by correlative conjunctions (either...or, neither...nor, not only...but also, not...but).
3. Comparison and contrast statements.

In the examples that follow, the parallel elements are underlined, and the coordinating/correlative conjunctions are **boldfaced**.



# 1. Linking by coordinating conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*).

During the party, the ice sculpture was melting **and** shrinking.

Now an adult dog, Marley will not stop barking **or** digging.

Give me liberty **or** give me death.

## 2. Linking by correlative conjunctions (*either...or, neither...nor, not only...but also, not...but*).

Blueberries are **not only** delicious **but also** rich in antioxidants.

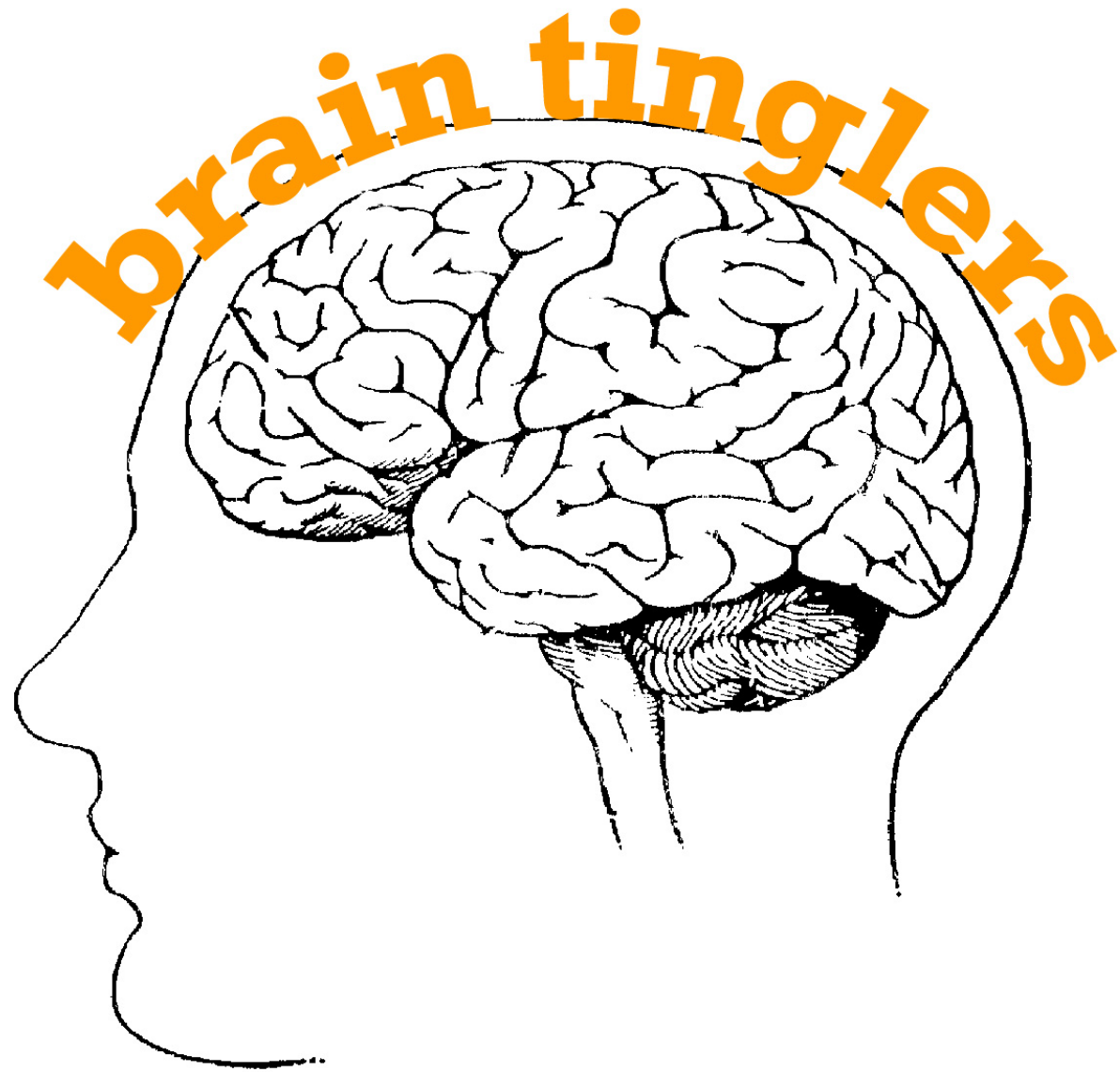
**Either** give me a refund **or** give me store credit.

As a kid, my sister would **neither** eat her vegetables **nor** clean her room.

### 3. Comparison and contrast statements.

Some say it is better to plan for tomorrow than to live for today.

Gamblers often credit luck rather than skill for their winning streaks.





In the following pairs, one sentence has parallel structure, and the other sentence lacks parallel structure. Which sentence is correct?

**A) Bob was not only Sam's roommate, but also he was his best friend.**

**B) Bob was not only Sam's roommate but also his best friend.**



A) Bob was not only Sam's roommate, but also he was his best friend.

**INCORRECT**

B) Bob was not only Sam's roommate but also his best friend.

Answer A is incorrect. Sam's roommate is a phrase, and he was his best friend is a sentence. Answer B is correct because his best friend is also a phrase.



In the following pairs, one sentence has parallel structure, and the other sentence lacks parallel structure. Which sentence is correct?

A) In preparation for the gala, I need to buy a cocktail dress, pick out shoes, and to get my hair cut and styled.

B) In preparation for the gala, I need to buy a cocktail dress, to pick out shoes, and to get my hair cut and styled.

A) In preparation for the gala, I need to buy a cocktail dress, pick out shoes, and to get my hair cut and styled.

**INCORRECT**

B) In preparation for the gala, I need to buy a cocktail dress, to pick out shoes, and to get my hair cut and styled.

Answer A is incorrect. To is used in the first phrase and the third phrase, so to should also be used in the second phrase.



In the following pairs, one sentence has parallel structure, and the other sentence lacks parallel structure. Which sentence is correct?

A. Before the dog show, the dogs were washed with shampoo, dried under blow dryers, and fluffed up with brushes.

B. Before the dog show, the dogs were washed with shampoo, dried under blow dryers, and fluffing was done with brushes.

A. Before the dog show, the dogs were washed with shampoo, dried under blow dryers, and fluffed up with brushes.

B. Before the dog show, the dogs were washed with shampoo, dried under blow dryers, and fluffing was done with brushes.

**INCORRECT**

Answer B is incorrect. *Washed with shampoo* and *dried under blow dryers* are verbs and prepositional phrases. *Fluffing was done...* is an independent clause.

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A woman with dark hair, wearing a blue dress and a pearl necklace, stands next to a yellow car. She is smiling and gesturing with her hands towards the text. The car's front grille is visible, featuring a circular emblem and the word "Fulley" in script.

*Join us next time...*

Inappropriate Shifts in Person/Tense