Parallel Structure

Brought to you by the Purdue University Online Writing Lab.

For more information about sentence structure, see our workshop on this topic at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_sentclar.html.

Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. This can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. The usual way to join parallel structures is with the use of coordinating conjunctions such as "and" or "or." (For more information on coordinating conjunctions, see our handout at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_clause.html.

1. Words and Phrases

With the -ing form (gerund) of words:

Parallel: Mary likes hiking, swimming, and bicycling.

With infinitive phrases:

Parallel: Mary likes to hike, to swim, and to ride a bicycle.

OR

Mary likes to hike, swim, and ride a bicycle.

(Note: You can use "to" before all the verbs in a sentence or only before the first one.)

For more information on gerunds and infinitives, see our handout at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_verbals.html.

Do not mix forms.

Example 1