Writing Parallel Structures

Learning the Skill

“My favorite hobbies are skateboarding, baking, and reading.”
“He cleaned his room, walked the dog, and finished his homework.”

The sentences above are examples of parallel structures. Parallel structures use the same word pattern to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. Parallelism makes your writing more concise and easier to follow. Most parallel structures are joined by the coordinating conjunctions and or or.

To check your writing for parallel structure:

• Skim your paper, pausing at the words and or or. Check to see whether the joined items are parallel, and revise accordingly.
• Make sure verbs are consistent in tense (such as jumped and shouted, or speaking and turning).
• Check items in a series for the use of articles such as the. Articles should be used either with every item in the series or only with the first item.
• Listening to the sound of your writing can help you pinpoint structural errors. Do lists or comparisons sound consistent? Do all verb endings, such as -ing or -ed, sound the same? Do you hear a repeated rhythm? If something interrupts consistency or rhythm, check to see if the structure needs to be revised to make it parallel.

✓ Practicing the Skill

Directions: Read each pair of sentences below. Circle the sentence that uses correct parallel structure.

1. A. She likes listening to rap and reading mystery novels.
   B. She likes listening to rap and to read mystery novels.

2. A. To find North Africa, locate an atlas, looking up the country in the index, and finding it south of the Mediterranean Sea.
   B. To find North Africa, locate an atlas, look up the country in an index, and find it south of the Mediterranean Sea.

3. A. Central Asia has coal, Kazakhstan has iron ore, and rich deposits of phosphates are located in Morocco.
   B. Central Asia has coal, Kazakhstan has iron ore, and Morocco has rich deposits of phosphates.
4. A. Trade routes include the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Arabian Sea.
   B. Trade routes include the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and the Arabian Sea.

5. A. To travel between the Mediterranean and Red Sea, ships head for the Suez Canal and sailing around Africa is avoided.
   B. To travel between the Mediterranean and Red Seas, ships head for the Suez Canal and avoid sailing around Africa.

**Applying the Skill**

**Directions:** Read each sentence below. Then rewrite each sentence using parallel structure.

1. Landforms in North Africa include mountains, the plains, and low-lying plateaus.

   (Sentences that are rewritten using parallel structure)

2. Strategic waterways link the Mediterranean and Black Seas and they separated Europe from Asia.

   (Sentences that are rewritten using parallel structure)

3. Every year, ancient Egyptians celebrated the Nile’s floods, used the rich farmland to grow crops, and supporting their communities.

   (Sentences that are rewritten using parallel structure)

4. This region consists of North Africa, and Southwest Asia and Central Asia are included.

   (Sentences that are rewritten using parallel structure)