

Grammar for Writing

Parallel Structure

Good writers use **parallel structure** in their writing. Parts of a sentence that have the same function should have the same form. Using parallel structure makes your writing much easier for the reader to understand.

Use parallel structure with *and* (coordinating conjunctions).

- ✗ In July, the weather is hot, dry, and it is very windy.
- ✓ In July, the weather is **hot, dry, and very windy**.

Be sure to use parallel structure with a coordinating conjunction such as **and**.

Use parallel structure for items in a list or series.

- ✗ The number of days in January is greater than April.
- ✓ **The number of days** in January is greater than **the number of days** in April.
- ✓ **January** is longer than **April**.

The first example is wrong because you are comparing *number* with *April*, which are not similar things.

- ✗ The smell of fried chicken is not as strong as fried fish.
- ✓ The **smell of fried chicken** is not as strong as the **smell of fried fish**.
- ✓ **Fried chicken** does not smell as strong as **fried fish**.

The first example is wrong because it compares a smell with a food, which are not similar things.

To avoid using the same noun twice, it is common to use the pronouns *that* (singular) or *those* (plural).

- OK In some countries, the **cost** of water is higher than the **cost** of oil.
- Better* In some countries, the **cost** of water is higher than **that** of oil.

The first example is acceptable, but it is wordy and a little awkward.

The *that of* structure results in a more fluent sentence.

ACTIVITY 13 Editing for Parallel Structure

Each sentence contains an error in parallel structure. Rewrite the sentence correctly.

1. According to the most recent data, the population of Spain is larger than Greece.

2. The company's annual report indicates excellent sales in January, March, and in July.

3. With only five days until the deadline, our team's project is not as good as the other team.

4. Many children like watching television and to play computer games.

5. To apply for a loan, you read about our different loan packages on our website, fill out the application completely, and submitted it to the correct loan officer at the bank.

6. According to the report, schools in California spend more money per student than New York.

7. For better heart health, three great forms of exercise involve our legs: jogging, distance running, and to take brisk walks.

8. To relax, I like surfing the Internet, working in the garden, and crossword puzzles.
