

## Effective Sentences: Parallel Structure

Parallel sentence structures use the same part of speech or grammatical structure to convey equal or related ideas.

▶ A series of equal or related ideas should be expressed in **parallel structure**, or in the same grammatical form.

1. Sentence parts linked by coordinating conjunctions (such as *and*, *but*, and *or*) should be parallel.

**FAULTY** Time of day, amount of light, and how far you are from the subject are all factors in taking photographs. [The three items in the complete subject are not parallel; the first two consist of a noun and a prepositional phrase; the third is a noun clause.]

**PARALLEL** Time of day, amount of light, and distance from the subject are all factors in taking photographs. [All three parts of the complete subject consist of a noun followed by a prepositional phrase.]

2. Sentence parts linked by correlative conjunctions (such as *either . . . or*, *whether . . . or*, *both . . . and*, *just as . . . so [too]*, *not only . . . but also*) should be parallel.

**FAULTY** He is not only our leader, but he is also responsible for our food. [In the first independent clause, a predicate nominative follows the verb. In the second independent clause, a predicate adjective and a phrase follow the verb.]

**PARALLEL** He is **not only** our leader **but also** our cook. [A possessive pronoun and a predicate nominative follow each part of the correlative conjunction. Do not include a comma.]

**PARALLEL** He is responsible **not only** for leading us **but also** for feeding us. [A prepositional phrase follows each part of the correlative conjunction. Do not include a comma.]

3. Sentence parts that compare or contrast should be parallel.

**FAULTY** I was more interested in the exhibit than in what Martha said. [A prepositional phrase precedes *than*; a noun clause follows the preposition after *than*.]

**PARALLEL** I was more interested in what the exhibit showed than in what Martha said. [Noun clauses both precede and follow *than*.]

**PARALLEL** I was more interested in the exhibit than in Martha's comments. [Prepositional phrases both precede and follow *than*.]

### TEST-TAKING TIP

Examples of faulty parallel structure appear often and in many forms on standardized tests. Make sure that the items in a series are in the same grammatical form. See item 12 on page 308.