

Parallel Construction

GRS Writing Group – WED 20 SEP 2017

Parallel construction involves using the same pattern of words for two or more ideas to improve readability. As you are writing consider how you can pattern text to provide the reader with a roadmap of your argument.

Parallel construction of lists

Example 1. You can improve your thesis writing today by committing to writing regularly, efficiently, and separating the creative phases of your writing from the editing and proofing stages of your writing.

One way to check for problems with the construction of lists is to read the stem with each item. You will hear parallelism problems more easily when reading text aloud than you will when proofing the text.

You can improve your thesis writing today by:

- committing to writing regularly
- efficiently [this item needs to be edited to match the form of the other two items]
- separating the creative phases of your writing from the editing and proofing stages of your writing.

Example 2. The present study, which aims to assess the role of science communication training within the biotechnology curriculum, will address the following research questions:

- What science communication content do undergraduate biotechnology lecturers currently include within their semester course outlines?
- To examine undergraduates' understanding of science communication, public engagement and their knowledge of tertiary curricula. [This should item needs to be edited to match the construction of the other items].
- What do science communication professionals consider to be best practice for the delivery of science communication materials?

In addition to considering the grammatical construction of lists, you should also consider a number of other features of lists. Such as should you create a vertical list, should the list be numbered, bulleted, or lettered, does the order of list match the order of subsequent relevant text, and have you correctly punctuated the list?

Parallel construction for comparisons

While we have often been taught to make our writing 'interesting', the interest in academic writing lies in the content. When making comparisons, to allow the reader to compare items easily, keep the position of items in the sentence in the same place and try to repeat as many words as possible.

Example 3. In winter, the lakes are often at maximum capacity. The lakes, during the drought in summer, hold much lower levels of water.

Better: In winter, when rainfall is high, the lakes are often at maximum capacity. In summer, when rainfall is low, the lakes hold much lower levels of water.

Example 4. At 12rpm, when assessing the rotation of the large platform, there is little movement of the arms. The arms of the smaller platform move erratically when it is rotating at 36rpm.

Better: The rotation of the large platform at 12rpm produces results in little movement of the arms. The rotation of the small platform at 36rpm results in erratic movements of the arms.



University of New England. Grammar: Parallel Structure

<https://aso-resources.une.edu.au/academic-writing/grammar/parallel-structure/>



Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL). Parallel Structure

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/623/1/>



Formatting vertical lists

<http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/formatting-vertical-lists?page=1>

Next session: WED OCT 4 Writing Concisely

Further details of the UWA GRS Writing Group, including advice sheets to download, here:
www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources/communities#writinggroup