

Ellen's

Grammar Corner

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Faulty Parallelism

- In a series of two or more, each element must
 - appear in the same grammatical **form/structure**
 - perform the same grammatical **function**



Faulty Parallelism

- Good writers use parallel structure to
 - “beat a rhythmic drum”
 - establish a pattern
 - repeat & stress an idea



Faulty Parallelism

- Candidates for parallel structure
 - entire sentence [ex: compound sentence]
 - **John hit** the ball, and **he ran** to first base.
 - sentence part [ex: compound subject, compound verb, or “other stuff”]
 - John **hit** the ball and **ran** to first base.
 - subordinate addition [ex: prepositional phrases]
 - John hit the ball **over the pitcher’s head, above the out-stretched hands of the shortstop, but into the waiting glove of the center fielder.**
 - subpart of subordinate addition [ex: -ing verb clauses]
 - After **stepping up** to the plate and **acknowledging** the cheers of the crowd, John hit the ball.



Faulty Parallelism

- When to use parallelism
 - presenting a series of items
 - Popular summer vacation activities include **visiting** relatives, **hiking** in state parks, and **spending** time at the beach.
 - offering choices
 - The instructor announced that each student in the class could either **write a ten-page report** or **take the final exam**.
 - making a point effectively
 - “**Ask not what** your country can do for you; **ask what** you can do for your country.” –*President John F. Kennedy*
- “Don’t ask what your country can do for you. Instead, you should be asking what you can do for your country” – not quite the same tone or emphasis!



Faulty Parallelism

- Correlative conjunctions
 - come in pairs
 - connect grammatically equal elements
 - both . . . and
 - either . . . or
 - neither . . . nor
 - not . . . but
 - not only . . . but (also)
 - whether . . . or



Faulty Parallelism – An Example: Food Irradiation

■ Not Parallel

- How is it good?
 - Longer shelf life
 - Using fewer pesticides
 - Kills bacteria
- Concerns
 - Nutritional value
 - Consumers are worried
 - Workers' safety

■ Parallel

- Benefits
 - Extends shelf life
 - Requires fewer pesticides
 - Kills bacteria
- Concerns
 - Lowers nutritional value
 - Alarms consumers
 - Endangers workers



Faulty Parallelism – An Example: Food Irradiation

- Example:

Many people favor food irradiation because it extends shelf life, requires fewer pesticides, and kills bacteria; on the other hand, opponents express concern over the fact that food irradiation lowers nutritional value, alarms consumers, and endangers workers.



Faulty Parallelism

- Sources:

- Elliott, Rebecca. *Painless Grammar*. NY: Barron's, 1997.
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