

PARALLEL SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Sentences sometimes list multiple verbs. These verbs must match each other and fit well with the rest of the sentence. Parallel structure occurs when a sentence maintains grammatically similar formatting. *Parallel sentences contain consistent tense, voice, and person.*

Tense: Past, Present, or Future

Person: 1st (I), 2nd (you), or 3rd (he, she, they)

Voice: Active vs. Passive

WRITING PARALLEL SENTENCES

1. **Determine your sentence tense** – Is your sentence about something that **happened (past)**? Something that is **happening (present)**? Or something that **will happen (future)**?
2. **Compare your verbs** – You should change your verb if one verb’s tense does not match the other verbs’ tenses.
3. **Establish a person point of view** – Who is the main character in your sentence? Is it I, you, he, she, or they? Verbs vary depending on the person of the sentence.
4. **Read each verb separately with the subject** – You should change your verb if the verb does not match the subject’s person.
5. **Use active voice** – The subject of your sentence should perform each action in your verb list.
6. **Check for extra subjects** – You should change your verbs if one phrase in your list contains both a subject and a “to be” verb.

EXAMPLES

1. **Incorrect Verb Tense:** “While at school, I **drank** tea, complete puzzles, and bake cookies.”

- **Determine your sentence tense:** “I complete” and “I bake” both occur in the present; therefore, present tense acts as this sentence’s tense.
- **Compare your verbs:** **drank (past)**, complete (present), and bake (present)
 - The past tense “drank” does not match the present tense verbs “complete” and “bake.” Change “drank” to present tense so that it matches the other verbs.

Parallel Verb Tense: “While at school, I **drink** tea, complete puzzles, and bake cookies.”

2. **Incorrect Person:** “She researches topics, write papers, and revises her work.”

- **Establish a person point of view:** The 3rd person “She” acts as the subject of this sentence.
- **Read each verb separately with the subject:** She researches, She write, She revises
 - The 1st person verb “write” does not match the 3rd person subject “She.” Change “write” to a 3rd person verb so that it matches the 3rd person subject.

Parallel Person: “She researches topics, *writes* papers, and revises her work.”

3. **Incorrect Voice:** “I draw pictures, write stories, and books are read.”

- **Use active voice:** “I” acts as the subject, and it performs the actions “draw” and “write.”
- **Check for extra subjects:** The phrase “books are read” contains a subject (books) and a “to-be” verb (are). **Rearrange the sentence so that the subject “I” performs the verb “read.”**

Parallel Voice: “I draw pictures, write stories, and *read* books.”

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