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.”