

From <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/GRAMMAR/parallelism.htm>

“This principle, that of parallel construction, requires that expressions of similar content and function should be outwardly similar. The likeness of form enables the reader to recognize more readily the likeness of content and function. Familiar instances from the Bible are the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the petitions of the Lord's Prayer.”

- from William Strunk's venerable [Elements of Style](#), which is maintained online by the Bartleby Project at Columbia University:

- **The Lord's Prayer**
- Our father, who art in heaven
 - Hallowed be thy name
 - Thy kingdom come
 - Thy will be done
 - On earth as it is heaven
 - Forgive us our trespases
- As we forgive them who trespass against us
 - Lead us not into temptation
 - But deliver us from evil.
 - For thine is the Kingdom,
 - The power and the glory
 - For ever and ever
 - Amen.

Faulty Parallelism	Corrected Version
Formerly, science was taught by the textbook method, while now the laboratory method is employed.	Formerly, science was taught by the textbook method; now it is taught by the laboratory method.

Faulty Parallelism	Corrected Version
The French, the Italians, Spanish, and Portuguese	The French, the Italians, the Spanish, and the Portuguese
In spring, summer, or in winter	In spring, summer, or winter (In spring, in summer, or in winter)

Faulty Parallelism	Corrected Version
It was both a long ceremony and very tedious.	The ceremony was both long and tedious.
A time not for words, but action	A time not for words, but for action
Either you must grant his request or incur his ill will.	You must either grant his request or incur his ill will.
My objections are, first, the injustice of the measure; second, that it is unconstitutional.	My objections are, first, that the measure is unjust; second, that it is unconstitutional.
My income is smaller than my wife.	My income is smaller than my wife's.

Structures Joined	Conjunction	Example
1. Two sentences	and	<u>John hit the ball</u> , and <u>he ran to first base</u> .
2. Two dependent <i>that</i> clauses	and	The book <u>that you enjoyed</u> and <u>that won the award</u> has <u>finally</u> arrived at the store.
3. Two adverbial clauses	and	He enjoyed the <u>movie</u> <u>because his favorite actor starred</u> and <u>because the special effects required computer technology</u> .
4. Three prepositional phrases	but	John hit the ball <u>over the pitcher's head</u> , <u>between the legs of the short stop</u> , but <u>into the waiting glove of the outfielder</u> .
5. Two subjects	and	<u>Lincoln</u> and <u>Jefferson</u> rank <u>among</u> our greatest presidents.
6. Two verbs	but	Lucy <u>waited</u> for two <u>hours</u> but then <u>decided</u> to leave.
7. Two direct objects	or	Lucy wants the <u>apple</u> or the <u>orange</u>

Correlative Conjunctions and Parallel Structure

Correlative conjunctions. come in pairs

either . . . or neither . . . nor not . . . but not only . . . but (also) both . . . and

Not Only - But Also Mistakes

If you want to use the *not only . . . but (also)* correlative conjunction, you should follow this model:

not only X but (also) Y

X = Y (in grammatical function) X = Y (in grammatical form)

1. not only [noun acting as subject] but [noun acting as subject]

Not only the CEO but the entire Board of Directors attended the press conference.

2. not only [verb] but also [verb]

The reporter not only contacted her sources but also spent many hours in the library.

3. not only [prepositional phrase] but [prepositional phrase]

He retraced his steps not only along the trail but throughout the camp.

4. not only [entire sentence] but [entire sentence]

Not only did the court reverse the lower court, but it sent a message to the police.

If you wrote the following, you would produce a nonparallel construction:

*The court **not only reversed** the lower court, **but it sent** a message to the police.*

Wrong	Corrected Version
<i>She not only wanted a <u>hamburger</u> but French fries.</i>	<i>She <u>wanted not only a hamburger</u> but French fries.</i>
Neither - Nor Mistakes Wrong	Corrected Version
<i>The <u>coach</u> neither wanted to lose nor to tie.</i>	<i>The <u>coach</u> wanted neither to lose nor to tie.</i>

Either - Or Mistakes

Some examples:

Wrong	Corrected Version
<i>Either you must wear your suit or your tux.</i>	<i>Either you must wear your suit, or you must wear your tux</i>
	<i>You must wear either your suit or your tux.</i>

Now you try:

1. Espinoza's style was remarkable for its dexterity, grace, and she could play any position.
2. Raoul's motivation to succeed in this program seems to be greater than his sister.
3. Three of the great Indian nations in the Central Plains are the Cherokee, the Choctaw, and Comanche.
4. Either you will begin to study now or risk failing the exam.
5. The college has space for a new computer lab but not a faculty lounge.
6. Her conditions for signing the contract are, first, the commissioner has to approve the terms; second, that the other players must sign as well.
7. Carlos wasted his first year at college by not studying enough and spending too much time at parties.

ANSWERS

1. *Espinoza's style was remarkable for its dexterity, grace, and versatility. [Now we have three nouns, not two nouns and a clause.]*
2. *Raoul's motivation to succeed in this program seems to be greater than his sister's. [We have to compare Raoul's motivation to his sister's motivation, not to his sister.]*
3. *Three of the great Indian nations in the Central Plains are the Cherokee, the Choctaw, and the Comanche. [Use the article "the" consistently for each noun.]*
4. *You will either begin studying now or risk failing the exam. [Either "this" or "that," not Either _clause_ or "that."] Another student suggests that "Either begin studying now or risk failing the exam." is tighter and carries a greater sense of urgency.*
5. *The college has space for a new computer lab but not for a faculty lounge. [Use the preposition "for" consistently.]*
6. *Her conditions for signing the contract are, first, that the commissioner must approve the terms; second, that the other players must sign as well. [Use the "that clause" construction consistently.] Or [another, better rendering] Her conditions for signing the contract are, first, that the commissioner must approve the terms, and second, that the other players have to sign.*
7. *Carlos wasted his first year at college by studying too little and partying too much.*