

## FAULTY PARALLELISM

*"Prose is architecture, not interior design."* - Ernest Hemingway

**The grammar outlaw:** Faulty Parallelism

**The grammar crime:** Faulty parallelism distracts the reader and disturbs the flow of the writing.

When two elements of a sentence are similar in meaning, you should express them in parallel form. In other words, all linked words should match in form.

By using parallel structure, we both clarify the meaning of our writing, and add pleasing symmetry to it. Parallel structure joins and emphasizes equally important ideas.

**Question:** How do we know we know if a sentence has faulty parallelism?

<b>Outlaw</b>
Shakespeare wrote comedies, tragedies, romances, and the plays based on historical figures.

This is a list; therefore, all of the linked words should be in the same form. Do any of the following not belong?

- comedies
- tragedies
- romances
- the plays based on historical figures.

The fourth does not belong; change it.

<b>Rehabilitated</b>
Shakespeare wrote comedies, tragedies, romances, and history plays.

**Question:** How do we catch faulty parallelism outlaws?

Look for comparisons and lists. Make sure all of the linked items are in the same form. For example, they should all be nouns, they should all begin with matching articles, or they should all be verbs.

**The clues:** There are five main situations in which parallelism may be an issue.

**1. Co-ordinating conjunctions (and, or, but, for, so, yet, or nor)**

<b>Outlaw</b>
Jane Eyre wants <b>financial independence</b> and <b>to find love</b> .
<b>Do the linked words match?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>financial independence: noun</li> <li>to find love: infinitive verb</li> </ul>
<b>No, so rehabilitate</b>
Jane Eyre wants <b>financial independence</b> and <b>love</b> .
Jane Eyre wants <b>to achieve</b> financial independence and <b>to find</b> love.

<b>Outlaw</b>	<b>Do the linked words match?</b>		<b>No, so rehabilitate</b>
Hal <b>seems to be</b> an irresponsible prince, but Hotspur <b>was</b> the traitor.	seems to be	Present tense	Hal <b>seems to be</b> an irresponsible prince, but Hotspur <b>is</b> the traitor.
	was	past tense	Hal <b>seemed to be</b> an irresponsible prince, but Hotspur <b>was</b> the traitor.

**2. Correlative Conjunctions**

- either A or B
- neither A nor B
- both A and B
- not only A but also B
- whether A or B

With these conjunctions, A and B are linked; therefore, they must be parallel in form.

Outlaw	Rehabilitated
Vasu not only <b>broke</b> Indian traditions, but also <b>was destroying</b> Nataraj's life.	Vasu not only <b>broke</b> Indian traditions, but also <b>destroyed</b> Nataraj's life.
	Vasu was not only <b>breaking</b> Indian traditions, but also <b>destroying</b> Nataraj's life.
In Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain," we do not know whether <b>the husband sees the original cat</b> or <b>a new cat</b> .	In Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain," we do not know whether <b>the husband sees the original cat</b> , or <b>he sees a new one</b> .

### 3. Words in a series

Outlaw	Rehabilitated
Throughout <i>The Diviners</i> , Laurence uses memory bank movies, lists, songs, and <b>some inner films</b> .	Throughout <i>The Diviners</i> , Laurence uses memory bank movies, lists, songs, and inner films.

### 4. Comparisons and contrasts using than or as (i.e., more than, as much as)

Outlaw	Rehabilitated
Joan <b>does not like</b> Chuck Brewer as much as she <b>seemed to like</b> the Royal Porcupine.	Joan <b>does not like</b> Chuck Brewer as much as she <b>likes</b> the Royal Porcupine.
In <i>The Collected Works of Billy the Kid</i> , <b>we empathise with Billy the Kid</b> , more than <b>Pat Garrett</b> .	In <i>The Collected Works of Billy the Kid</i> , <b>we empathise with Billy the Kid</b> , more than <b>we empathise with Pat Garrett</b> .

### 5. Function words:

- **prepositions** (to, by, in, for)
- **articles** (a, an, the)
- **the infinitive** (to)
- **introductory words** (that, who, which, because, when)

A function word that begins one clause must begin the others.

Outlaw	Rehabilitated
Rohinton Mistry often writes about <b>the</b> Indian immigrant experience and Parsi community.	Rohinton Mistry often writes about <b>the</b> Indian immigrant experience and <b>the</b> Parsi community.
Andrew believes <b>that</b> Jerry Bines is innocent, and Vera's book does not characterise Jerry properly.	Rohinton Mistry often writes about Indian immigrant experiences and Parsi communities.
	Andrew believes <b>that</b> Jerry Bines is innocent, and <b>that</b> Vera's book does not characterise Jerry properly.