

Unit Seven Joining Parallel Structures

The coordinators *and*, *or*, and *but* can join parts of sentences; the sentence parts are called parallel because they are similar grammatical structures that express similar ideas. The parallel structures in the sentences below are underlined:

Shauna and Lisa watch movies every weekend.
Shauna laughs or cries all during the films.
Lisa eats popcorn constantly but quietly.

In the following exercise, you will be joining sets of sentences like the ones below. (Notice the crossed-out words; when you join parallel structures, you can be more concise because you avoid repeating words.) The joining word *and*, *or*, or *but* is given in brackets to tell you which word to use.

EXAMPLE: Latisha ate a burrito. [and]
~~Latisha ate~~ a taco.

SOLUTION: Latisha ate a burrito and a taco.

EXAMPLE: Rudy started the car. [and]
~~Rudy~~ backed out of the driveway.

SOLUTION: Rudy started the car and backed out of the driveway.

Exercise One The Decision

1. Sonia was planning to move into the dorms. [or]
Sonia was planning to move into an apartment with a friend.
2. She listed the benefits of each place. [and]
She listed the drawbacks of each place.
3. The apartment was close to campus. [and]
The apartment was close to the mall.

4. The dorm fee was more expensive.
It included room and board. *[but]*
5. She could have her own room in the apartment.
She would have to share a dorm room with another student. *[but]*
6. Sonia knew her friend was studious and responsible.
Sonia didn't know what her dorm roommate would be like. *[but]*
7. Sonia discussed her options with her parents.
Sonia discussed her options with her friends. *[and]*
8. Her parents thought she should wait a year before moving out.
Her friends agreed. *[and]*
9. Sonia chose to reject her parents' advice.
Sonia chose to reject her friends' advice. *[and]*
10. She decided to enroll in Clown College.
She decided to at least join the local circus. *[or]*
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Joining Three or More Parallel Ideas

The coordinators *and*, *or*, and *but* can also join three or more elements in a sentence; all of the elements should have similar grammatical structures.

Examples: Shauna, her boyfriend, and Lisa watch movies every weekend.

Latisha ate a burrito, a taco, and a banana split.

Rudy started the car, backed out of the driveway, and crashed into the potted plant.

Often a series of parallel structures has descriptive modifiers:

Yesterday I finished my homework,
 took my sister to the dentist,
 cooked dinner,
and went to bed at midnight.

The important thing is that the parallel parts—the verbs *finished*, *took*, *cooked*, and *went*—all have the same grammatical structure and can follow the sentence subject—*I*.

The Cosmic Navy

Combine the following sets of sentences to create one sentence that contains a parallel series of two, three, or four parts. The coordinators are given in brackets.

EXAMPLE: Fenwick joined the Cosmic Navy.

His sister Sally joined the Cosmic Navy. *[and]*

His best friend Morton joined the Cosmic Navy.

SOLUTION: Fenwick, his sister Sally, and his best friend Morton joined the Cosmic Navy.

1. They wanted to travel around the world.
They wanted to learn about different cultures. *[and]*
They wanted to become independent.

2. Fenwick thought he could become a captain. *[or]*
Fenwick thought he could become an admiral.

3. Morton wanted to make a lot of money. *[and]*
Morton wanted to meet a lot of people.

4. Sally wanted experience as a naval engineer. *[and]*
Sally wanted opportunities to do undersea photography.

5. Sally became an excellent underwater photographer. *[and]*
Sally was promoted to captain.
Sally began to give orders to Fenwick and Morton.

6. Fenwick soon realized that he would never become an admiral.
Fenwick realized that he would never become a captain.
He grew tired of taking orders. *[or]*
[and]
7. Morton met a lot of people.
Morton made a lot of money.
He didn't have any place to spend it. *[and]*
[but]
8. Fenwick decided to stage a mutiny.
Morton decided to stage a mutiny.
They disagreed over tactics. *[and]*
[but]
9. Fenwick wanted Morton to disguise himself as a dolphin.
Fenwick wanted Morton to swim alongside the ship.
Fenwick wanted Morton to distract Sally while he took over the ship.
Morton wanted to bribe Sally. *[and]*
[but]
[and]
Morton wanted to take command of the ship himself.
10. Sally discovered their plot. *[and]*
Sally threatened to give them galley duty. *[or]*
She threatened to abandon them at the next port. *[but]*
Fenwick promised to pose underwater for her. *[and]*
Morton bought everyone a round of drinks.
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