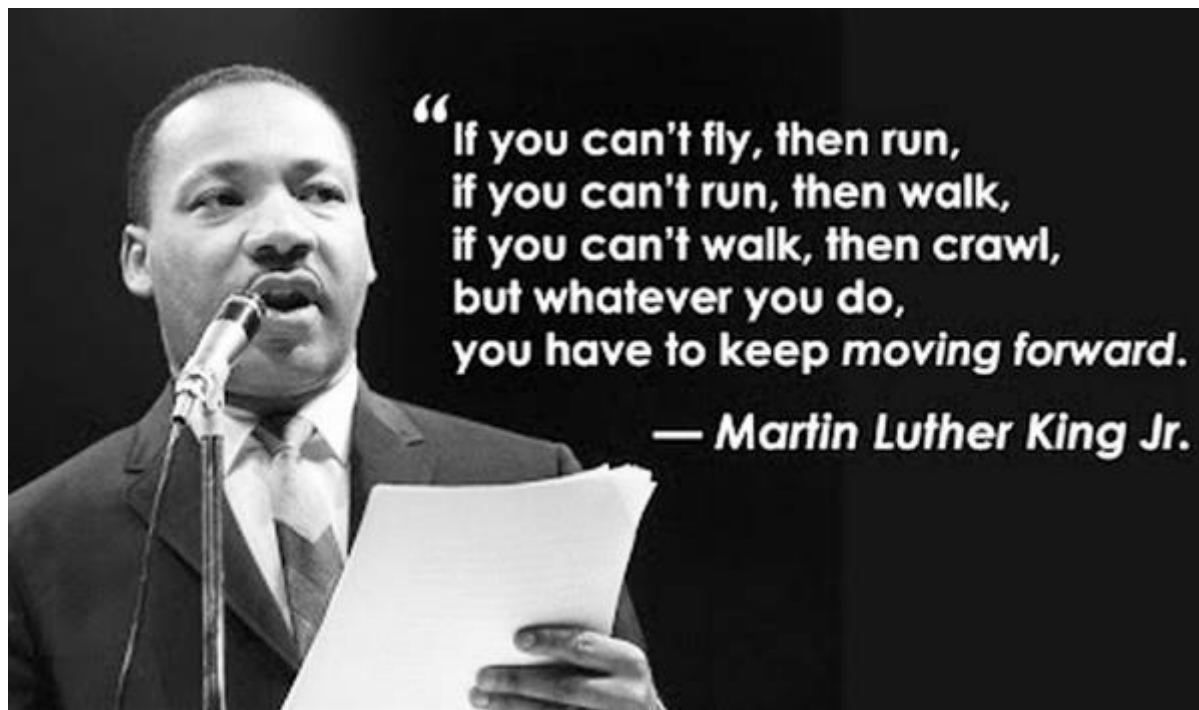


PARALLEL STRUCTURES

Academic Writing – Cohesion & Coherence



This is a great example of parallel structure because it uses the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. It provides balance and clarity in your writing.

In addition, parallelism gives your essay rhythm, you should make your language as even and balanced as possible for the reader to have an easier understanding of your texts. Subjects, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and gerunds must be parallel. The following is an example of a sentence that is not parallel.

*I like **to sing** and **dancing***

The problem in this sentence is not the expression **to sing** nor the word **dancing**. The expression to sing and the word dancing are correct by themselves. The problem is that they are joined together on one sentence with *and*. We can correct the sentence in two forms:

*I like **to sing** and **to dance***

I like singing and dancing

There are two aspects of parallel structures you need to take into account: the use of parallel structure with and, but, or (coordinate conjunctions) and both, either, neither, not only (paired conjunctions)

Coordinate conjunctions

The job of coordinate conjunctions is to join together equal expressions. In other words, what is on one side of these words must be parallel to what is on the other side. These conjunctions can join nouns, or verbs, or adjectives, or phrases. Look at the following examples where parallel structures are described:

She is not a teacher *but* a doctor. (both nouns)

You can stay home *or* go to the movies with me. (both verbs)

My mother is sincere, friendly, *and* nice. (all of them are adjectives)

Paired conjunctions

The paired conjunctions both... and, either...or, neither...nor, and not only...but require parallel structures. Look at the following examples where parallel structures are described:

I know *both* Luisa *and* Fernando

Either Peter *or* Mark has the book

The card is *neither* in my pocket *nor* in my purse!

He *not only* works hard *but also* plays hard

TIPS

- ✓ Skim your paper, pausing at the words "and" and "or." Check on each side of these words to see whether the items joined are parallel. If not, make them parallel.
- ✓ If you have several items in a list, put them in a column to see if they are parallel.

- ✓ Listen to the sound of the items in a list or the items being compared. Do you hear the same kinds of sounds? For example, is there a series of "-ing" words beginning each item? Or do you hear a rhythm being repeated? If something is breaking that rhythm or repetition of sound, check to see if it needs to be made parallel.

Task 1

Analyze the following sentences and indicate if the parallel structure is correct or not. Make the corrections as necessary.

- a. Dogs provide very young children an important chance to learn or maintaining social skills.

- b. My parents didn't have time to buy food or preparing some for us.

- c. I believe zoos are useful both in terms of educating general public as well as they can advance scientific research.

- d. Agricultural research improves citizens' lives, whereas successful businesses to improve a country's economy.

- e. Teachers can instruct tomorrow's leaders, doctors can make those leaders healthier and engineering can guarantee that future generations have a good place to live.



*adapted from Writing for the TOEFL, Barrons,L , 2008.