

Parallel Structure

- Parallel structure occurs when a sentence maintains grammatically similar formatting across all of its parts so that the whole sentence reads correctly.
- This principle arises most often in sentences that contain listed items.
 - ❖ Ex. ***I bought butter, milk, and eggs.***
- Sentences that lack parallel structure are grammatically *incorrect*, so the writer must revise them accordingly.

Explanation

- Person (1st, 2nd, 3rd), tense, and voice (active vs. passive), along with their nouns, should all be consistent throughout a sentence.
- Commonly, subject and verbs provide the biggest source of confusion.
- Compare the two:
 - ❖ **Incorrect:** While at school, I drank tea, completes puzzles, and cookies are baked.
 - ❖ **Correct:** While at school, I drink tea, complete puzzles, and bake cookies.

Revision

- Reading sentences aloud help writers notice grammatically incorrect sentences.
- **Tense:** **While at school, I drank tea, complete puzzles, and bake cookies.**
 - ❖ Here, “drank” is past tense while “complete” and “bake” are present tense. Switching tense in the middle of a sentence is grammatically incorrect. Tenses may vary according to discipline, but writers should maintain the same tense to achieve parallel structure.
- **Person:** **While at school, I drink tea, completes puzzles, and bake cookies.**
 - ❖ Here, the “completes” indicates 3rd person (e.g. She completes). The subject “I” is 1st person, which is incorrect since the formatting reads as “I completes.” Since there is only one subject at the beginning, the subject here applies to all items in the list. If writers need to change the subject, they should add a subject before each item.
 - Ex. **“While at school I drink tea, she completes puzzles, and I bake cookies.”**
 - ❖ *Note: “While at school I drink tea, she completes puzzle, and bake cookies” is also incorrect because “bake” lacks a subject. Listed items must either share a single subject at the beginning, or each item must have their own subject; this example mixes the two.*
- **Voice:** **While at school, I drink tea, compete puzzles, and cookies are baked.**
 - ❖ “Cookies are baked” is formatted in passive voice. This switches the voice from active to passive and changes the subject in the middle of the sentence from “I” to “cookies.” Writers should maintain the same voice throughout the sentence. (Please see the Person revision for formatting consistent subjects).
 - ❖ While academia prefers active voice, using passive in the sentence **“While at school, I drink tea, I complete puzzles, and cookies are baked”** is also grammatically correct because each item has a subject.