

5 Examples of Faulty Parallel Structure from DAILY WRITING TIPS

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One type of grammatical errors seen frequently is that of faulty parallel structure, in which corresponding words or phrases do not match to create a logical syntax. Here are five examples of sentences in which parallel structure is flawed, with a discussion of each error.

1. She played at San Francisco venues such as the Avalon, the Fillmore, and Carousel Ballroom.

In isolation, the names of each of these venues should be preceded by *the*: “the Avalon,” “the Fillmore,” and “the Carousel Ballroom.” When listed together in one sentence, the same is true: “She played at San Francisco venues such as the Avalon, the Fillmore, and the Carousel Ballroom.”

2. I’m not just upset that Mary told Jane, but also that she was so rude.

The writer is upset about not only A but also B, so the verb should precede the counterpoint phrases “not just that” (the three words of which should not be interrupted by another) and “also that”: “I’m upset not just that Mary told Jane but also that she was so rude.” Note also that the comma before “but also” is unnecessary.

3. The site does not look at opinions or predictions, but statements that the general public would be interested in knowing the truth about.

Just as in the previous example, the opposing phrases (in this case, “not at” and “but at”) should both follow the verb they share (in this case, *look*, which should not intervene in the first of the two phrases): “The site looks not at opinions or predictions but at statements that the general public would be interested in knowing the truth about.”

4. The website evaluates only statements that are clear, precise, and are not obviously true.

Three adjectives listed in this sentence—*clear*, *precise*, and *true*—can share a verb, or each can be preceded by its own verb, but this sentence does not apply either option; the first and third adjectives have their own verbs but *precise* doesn't. The correct alternatives are “The website evaluates only statements that are clear, precise, and not obviously true” and “The website evaluates only statements that are clear, are precise, and are not obviously true.”

5. The virus is usually picked up through contact with an infected person, consuming food or drinks contaminated with the virus, or by touching a contaminated surface and then touching your mouth.

Similar to the previous example, in this sentence, the three items in this list can share a preposition, or each can have its own (not necessarily the same one used three times). The choices are “The virus is usually picked up through contact with an infected person, consuming food or drinks contaminated with the virus, or touching a contaminated surface and then touching your mouth” and “The virus is usually picked up through contact with an infected person, by consuming food or drinks contaminated with the virus, or by touching a contaminated surface and then touching your mouth.”