

English

Common Core State Standards

9th Grade

Parallel structure, phrases & clauses, punctuation conventions, figurative language, spelling, vocabulary & more!

Why is it important to understand conventions, usage, and vocabulary? Why is it important to show your skill in these areas? Why does it matter?

Will any of this make a difference after you get out of high school? The answer is a resounding YES! Your college and career years will be easier and more valuable if you've mastered correct conventions and developed enriched vocabulary skills. Your grades will be better, and your potential for achieving college and career goals will be remarkably enhanced.

Suppose you're thinking of doing business with an online retailer. You might want to order a pair of jeans or a backpack. If you check out the website and it's filled



with links that don't work and errors in convention and usage, leaving you confused about items available for sale and their pricing, you're likely to move on to another site to make your purchase. That's a reality of life: If you find the site unclear and filled with errors, you likely won't trust the business, and you won't want to make a purchase. Instead, you'll seek out a site that offers clear information.

Similarly, if a potential or current employer is confused by your conventions and usage—or if the potential or current employer is not impressed by your vocabulary—the employer will likely consider moving on to find someone else to do the job.

Getting a strong handle on conventions, usage, and vocabulary will give you strong tools to achieve college, career, and general life goals.

PARALLEL STRUCTURE L.18-10.1.6

Imagine an architect who has spent time to design and develop a new building. Perhaps it is a spectacular structure with beautiful columns. No matter how gorgeous the columns are, if they are not parallel, the structure likely will fall. The columns will not be able to support the structure. As the building crashes to the ground, the architect will lose credibility.

The same is true of your sentence construction. Parallel structure is essential. If your sentences lack parallel structure, you can quickly lose credibility, and the power of your words can be discounted. Even if you have worked long and hard to complete research or literary analysis, your final product will not be able to stand up to scrutiny. You might wonder, *Why is parallel construction so important in sentences?* The answer is simple: It might be difficult, or impossible, for a reader to understand your meaning if your sentence lacks parallel structure. At the very least, the sentence will be awkward and will create confusion for the reader.

How do you achieve parallel structure? Make certain that words serving the same function in a sentence have the same form. Check your sentences for parallel words, parallel phrases, and parallel clauses.

Be sure that coordinate parts of a sentence have parallel structure. How do you identify coordinate parts of a sentence? Look for coordinating conjunctions such as *and*, *but*, *for*, *or*, *yet*, and *nor*.

EX: The following sentence lacks parallel structure.

The actors understood the importance of the rigorous *rehearsals*, the elaborate *costumes*, and *coming* for the performance *dates*.

The following sentence has parallel structure. The words *rehearsals*, *costumes*, and *dates* are all nouns.

The actors understood the importance of the *rehearsals*, the *costumes*, and the performance *dates*.

TIP: Check for parallel structure when you use coordinating conjunctions. List items in a series, and use correlative conjunctions, such as *either...or* and *neither...nor*.

Q&A Q: Is there a quick way for me to check to be sure a sentence has parallel structure?

A: Yes. Ask yourself this question: *Do words, as well as groups of words, serving the same function have the same form?* If the answer is no, then revise so that their form is the same. If the answer is yes, then congratulations! Your sentence already has parallel structure.

FYI: Authors might sometimes intentionally develop sentences that lack parallel structure. The purpose is generally to emphasize a point or to portray a character in a specific light.

Make your knowledge work for you!

On your own sheet of paper, revise each sentence to provide parallel structure.

1. The tennis player enjoys tournaments, travel, and to receive awards.
2. Grimacing in pain, rubbing the sore muscles, and to work out again are all part of the tennis player's routine.
3. To be certain her games are the best they can be, the tennis player eats vegetables, drinks water, and will practice volleys.

PHRASES & CLAUSES L.18-10.1.6

Students often confuse phrases and clauses. It's important to know the distinctions between the two, as you need to understand the rules that apply to each. Knowing the distinctions between phrases and clauses will also help you convey your specific meaning to your reader and add variety to your writing and presentations.

Phrases and clauses are both groups of related words. A **clause** contains a verb and a subject; a **phrase** does not. Even though it's made up of a group of words, a phrase acts as a single part of speech in a sentence.

Q&A Q: Can a phrase and a clause begin with the same subordinating conjunction?

A: Yes. You can determine whether the group of words is a phrase or a clause by looking for a verb and a subject.

EX: A phrase lacks a verb and a subject.

The controversy escalated *after determination of guilt*.

A clause includes a verb and a subject.

The controversy escalated *after guilt was determined*.

Types of Phrases

Prepositional Phrases: Adjectival & Adverbial Phrases

• A **prepositional phrase** consists of a preposition, its object (usually a noun or pronoun), and any words that modify the object.

FYI: The object of a preposition can also be a nominal, a word that functions as a noun. A nominal is a noun substitute, such as a gerund, a nominal adverb, or a nominal adjective.

EX: *preposition* *modifiers* *object of the preposition*

We looked *through the new telescopes*.
prepositional phrase

preposition *object of the preposition*

The astronomer handed the notes *on her*.
prepositional phrase

• A prepositional phrase can act as an adjective or an adverb. When it acts as an adjective, it can be referred to as an **adjectival phrase**. When it acts as an adverb, it can be referred to as an **adverbial phrase**.

Q&A Q: Does case matter for a pronoun serving as the object of a preposition?

A: Yes. Be sure to use the objective case form, not the subjective case form.

Objective Case

me, you, her, him, it, us, them

Subjective Case

I, you, she, he, it, we, they

Take a look at the following prepositional phrase. It's the same in both sentences, but it acts as an adverb in one and an adjective in the other.

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Table of Contents Common Core Unit 9th Grade English

1. Understanding the eBook Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - The Rise of Digital Reading Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - Common Core Unit 9th Grade English User Reviews and Ratings
 - Common Core Unit 9th Grade English and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Common Core Unit 9th Grade English Free and Paid eBooks
 - Common Core Unit 9th Grade English Public Domain eBooks
 - Common Core Unit 9th Grade English eBook Subscription Services
 - Common Core Unit 9th Grade English Budget-Friendly Options
6. Navigating Common Core Unit 9th Grade English eBook Formats

- ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - Common Core Unit 9th Grade English Compatibility with Devices
 - Common Core Unit 9th Grade English Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - Interactive Elements Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 8. Staying Engaged with Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
 11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - Setting Reading Goals Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
 12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Common Core Unit 9th Grade English
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
 13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
 - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
 - Exploring Educational eBooks
 14. Embracing eBook Trends
 - Integration of Multimedia Elements
 - Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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