Unit Eight

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.

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Exercise One The Decision

1. Sonia was planning to move into the dorms.
   Sonia was planning to move into an apartment with a friend. ***[or]***

2. She listed the benefits of each place.
   She listed the drawbacks of each place. ***[and]***

3. The apartment was close to campus.
   The apartment was close to the mall. ***[and]***

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]***

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7. Sonia discussed her options with her parents. ***[and]***
   Sonia discussed her options with her friends.

8. Her parents thought she should wait a year before moving out. ***[and]***
   Her friends agreed.

9. Sonia chose to reject her parents' advice. ***[and]***
   Sonia chose to reject her friends' advice.

10. She decided to enroll in Clown College. ***[or]***
    She decided to at least join the local circus.

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*.

Exercise Two 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.
His best friend Morton joined the Cosmic Navy. *[and]*

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.
They wanted to become independent. *[and]*

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

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

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

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

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6. Fenwick soon realized that he would never become an admiral. *[or]*
Fenwick realized that he would never become a captain. *[and]*
He grew tired of taking orders.

7. Morton met a lot of people. *[and]*
Morton made a lot of money. *[but]*
He didn't have any place to spend it.

8. Fenwick decided to stage a mutiny. *[and]*
Morton decided to stage a mutiny. *[but]*
They disagreed over tactics.

9. Fenwick wanted Morton to disguise himself as a dolphin.
Fenwick wanted Morton to swim alongside the ship. *[and]*
Fenwick wanted Morton to distract Sally while he took over the ship. *[but]*
Morton wanted to bribe Sally. *[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.

Exercise Three You Be the Co-Author

In this exercise, you will create parallel structures matching the underlined words to complete the sentences. Remember to join the parallel structures with *and*, *but*, or *or* before the last item in the list of parallel structures. Try to use all three of the coordinators that join parallel structures.

EXAMPLE: My favorite foods are burritos, _____

_____

SOLUTION: My favorite foods are burritos, pasta, broccoli, peaches, and chocolate cake.

1. To have a happy childhood, children should have a safe home, _____

_____

2. Once I graduate from college, I'll go to graduate school, _____

_____

3. People can protect the environment by recycling, _____

_____

4. I sometimes envy students who are good at statistics, _____

_____

5. I'd like to travel to Mexico, _____

_____

6. I wish the U.S. government would provide better health care, _____

_____

7. My closest friend is reliable, _____

_____

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8. Whenever I'm looking for a job, I <u>search</u> the want-ads, _____
_____

9. I spent the weekend <u>cleaning</u> my kitchen, _____
_____

10. <u>Watching</u> movies, _____
_____

are my favorite things to do.

In the following exercise, you will use coordinators, subordinators, and parallel structures to create one sentence from each set of sentences. The logical relationships, and suggestions for using coordinators or subordinators to express the relationships, are given in brackets. You will have to discover which parts of sentences can be joined with *and*, *or*, or *but* to form parallel structures. Always plan your solution and read your combined sentences aloud.

EXAMPLE: People have long argued about whether genes determine our personalities the most.
People have long argued about whether the environment determines our personalities the most.
[coordinator—contrast] Now many scientists believe that nature and nurture work together.

SOLUTION: People have long argued about whether genes or the environment determines our personalities the most, but now many scientists believe that nature and nurture work together.

1. Scientists now believe that genes determine only the brain's main circuits of neurons.
Scientists now believe that the environment shapes the trillions of connections between neurons.

2. ***[subordinator—time]*** Babies are born.
Their brains have trillions of neurons.
[coordinator—contrast] Only some of these neurons are functional.

3. Some of the neurons have already formed circuits that regulate breathing.
The circuits regulate heartbeat.
The circuits regulate body temperature.
The circuits regulate reflexes.

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4. Other neurons have not formed circuits.
[subordinator or coordinator—cause] These neurons become functional only when they respond to outside stimuli.

5. ***[subordinator—condition or time]*** The neurons are stimulated.
They are integrated into the circuitry of the brain.
[subordinator or coordinator—cause] They connect to other neurons.

6. ***[subordinator—condition]*** The neurons are not stimulated.
The neurons may wither.
The neurons may die.

7. Childhood experiences stimulate neurons.
Childhood experiences determine whether a child will be confident.
Childhood experiences determine whether a child will be fearful.

8. Experiments with rats show new evidence that the neurons can be stimulated with play.
Experiments are with monkeys.
Experiments are with human babies.
The neurons can be stimulated with purposeful training.

9. Scientists have found that music helps develop children's brain circuits.
[coordinator—effect] Parents should sing songs with their children.
Parents should play structured, melodic music.
Parents should give their children music lessons.
[subordinator—condition] Their children show musical aptitude.
Their children show musical interest.

10. ***[subordinator—time]*** Children listen to classical music.
They exercise neurons.
They strengthen circuits for mathematics.
[subordinator—cause] The brain circuits for math are close to the circuits for music.

11. Scientists have found that talking to children helps develop children's brain circuits for language.
[coordinator—effect] Parents should talk to their children a lot.

12. Parents can also influence their children's circuits for emotions.
[subordinator—condition] The parents recognize their children's emotions.
The parents return their children's emotions.

13. ***[subordinator—condition or time]*** A parent approves of his or her child's happiness.
The child's circuits for happy emotions are reinforced.

14. ***[subordinator—condition or time]*** A parent disapproves of his or her child's happiness.
The circuits are confused.
The circuits will not strengthen.

15. ***[subordinator—condition or time]*** A parent hugs an upset child.
The child learns to calm himself or herself down.

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Review Exercise 2 Nature and Nurture

16. ***[subordinator—condition or time]*** A parent yells at an upset child.
The child doesn't learn to calm himself or herself down.
[subordinator or coordinator—cause] The parent's response does not stimulate the circuits for calming down.

17. But the parent's actions have to be repeated over time.
[subordinator or coordinator—cause] One mistake will not scar a child for life.

18. ***[subordinator—cause]*** Environmental influences begin early in life.
People often confuse them with genetic causes.
[coordinator—contrast] Actually, the environmental stimuli are crucial for development.