

Parallelism

Elements combined or compared in a sentence should take the same grammatical form.

Consider the following sentence:

Victorians had plans for their daughters as well as their sons; these children were going to be raised with a future in mind - girls learning to be wives, mothers, and caretakers while boys prepared to be scholars and successful financial providers.

The problem is in the last part of the sentence, where the writer introduces a comparison between **girls** and **boys**. The two sexes are being brought up by the Victorians to live two different kinds of life. But the girls' education is described using the *-ing* form of the relevant verb (**learning**), whereas the boys' education is described using the indicative form (**prepared**). (The result, technically, is a comparison between a noun + adjective phrase - *girls learning...* - and a noun + verb, *boys prepared*.)

The sentence can be improved by changing the form of either verb.

Victorians had plans for their daughters as well as their sons; these children were going to be raised with a future in mind - girls **learning** to be wives, mothers, and caretakers, boys **preparing** to be scholars and successful financial providers.

OR

Victorians had plans for their daughters as well as their sons; these children were going to be raised with a future in mind - girls **learned** to be wives, mothers, and caretakers, while boys **prepared** to be scholars and successful financial providers.

Note that either change will make the sentence more effective by heightening the contrast between the boys' and girls' education. Keeping the grammatical structure the same on both sides of the comparison makes the words **boys** and **girls** stand out as the single important difference between the two sides.