***The Parallel Structure***

In writing, **parallelism** means using **the same grammatical forms** to express similar ideas. Being able to identify the parts of speech is an important part of understanding different grammatical forms.

Here are some of the most common parallelism problems that students often encounter:

**1.** **Items in a Series:**

To be parallel, items in a seriesmust all be expressed in the same grammatical form.

**E.g:** (incorrect) The workers in the warehouse **pushed, pulled,** and **had to carry** the boxes.

The last item of the series is not parallel with the first two members of the series because a different verb form is used. To correct the error, the same form of carry should be used.

**E.g:** (correct) The workers in the warehouse **pushed, pulled,** and **carried** the boxes.

**E.g:** Yolanda is **pretty, tall,** and **acts** friendly.

Two items in the series are adjectives and one is not. To balance the series, change the last item to an adjective.

􀀗 Yolanda is **pretty, tall,** and **friendly.**

**2. Pairs**

Use parallel constructions for **pairs**—that is, for words joined by the coordinating conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*).

E.g: She likes **spicy pumpkin pies** and **cakes that are chocolate and delicious.**

The second item in this pair does not follow the same grammatical form as the first item. To correct the error, put the second member of the pair into the same grammatical structure as the first.

She likes **spicy pumpkin pies** and **delicious chocolate cakes.**

**-Verb Forms:**

E.g: I like **to cook,** but I don’t like **cleaning up.**

The first verb phrase includes the infinitive to cook, but the second verb phrase includes a gerund, cleaning. Using the same verb form for each will help the sentence follow a pattern.

I like **to cook,** but I don’t like **to clean up.**

• Use parallel construction in pairs joined by **correlative conjunctions** (both . . . and, either . . . or, neither . . . nor, not only . . . but also, andwhether . . . or).

**Examples:**

Gerund phrase Gerund phrase

Either **going for a ride** or **lying in the sun** is my idea of a good time.

N N

I like neither the **taste** nor the **texture** of this cake.

ADJ ADJ

My current job is both **stressful** and **demanding.**

PREP PHRASE PREP PHRASE

Not only am I late **for my appointment,** but also I am **out of breath.**

NOUN CLAUSE NOUN CLAUSE

Whether **you drive a car** or **you take a bus,** you should leave early.

**3. Comparisons:**

As with series and pairs, the different parts of a comparison must be parallel.

E.g: I prefer **to make** Christmas presents rather than **buying** them at a store.

This sentence is awkward because an infinitive form, to make, is used in the first part of the comparison and a gerund form, buying, is used in the second part of the comparison. The sentence becomes parallel when two infinitive forms or two gerund forms are used.

I prefer **to make** Christmas presents rather than **to buy** them at a store.

I prefer **making** Christmas presents rather than **buying** them at a store.

**4. Phrases and clauses**

Pairs and series of phrases and clauses in sentences should have similar grammatical structures. You should balance a phrase with a phrase and a clause with a clause.

PREP PHRASE PREP PHRASE

My mother likes to vacation **at the beach** and **in the mountains.**

INF PHRASE INF PHRASE

My seventh-grade teacher would not allow us **to chew gum** or **to wear shorts.**

CLAUSE CLAUSE

I don’t want to go to the game **because it is raining** and **because I am tired.**

CLAUSE CLAUSE

No matter **how much I study** or **how hard I work,** I still have difficulty in algebra.

**5. Parallel words**

When writing sentences that include series and pairs, you should balance an article with an article, a preposition with a preposition, and a subordinating conjunction with a subordinating conjunction.

**Examples:**

I’d like **a** milkshake, **a** hot dog, and **a** piece of apple pie.

Annalise is looking for a bike **with** handbrakes and **with** a basket.

I was given the scholarship **because** I was the first eleventh grader to win a National Science Foundation award and **because** I was an A student.