

Lecture 05: Sentence Construction Mechanics

1. Parallelism in Writing

Using **parallelism** means that you write all the similar parts of a sentence in the same way. If you've used two nouns, don't suddenly switch to a gerund. If you've used verbs that have a certain tense, don't suddenly change tenses.

Examples:

This afternoon I washed, waxed, and vacuumed the car.

I was worried that Bill would drive too fast, that the road would be too slippery, and that the police would stop the car.

I was nervous and frightened, but I hid my emotions. My sister was confident and carefree, but she showed the world how she felt.

Here are examples of single word parallel structures:

Sarah writes poetry and short stories. (Nouns)

My sister walks or rides her bike to work. (Verbs)

She is not only strong but also fast. (Adjectives)

Peter drives quickly and aggressively. (Adverbs)

Here are examples of phrases parallel structures:

Having fun is as important as working hard.

She advised me to get some sleep and take some time off work.

Work in group is as necessary as play in team.

An apple is as good for you as an orange. .

Driving through the countryside and speaking to the people, she began to understand the Algerian culture better.

Finally, clauses can also be used to make parallel structures.

Examples:

Peter felt that he had made an excellent deal and that he had bought a masterpiece.

Since it was easy to use and because it was cheap, it sold very well.

2. Variety in Writing

Recurrence means repeating a basic sentence pattern. *Variety* means changing the pattern. Paradoxical as it sounds, good sentence style must do both. Enough sameness must appear in the sentences to make the writing seem all of a piece; enough difference to create interest. The best way to keep your writing interesting is to vary the sentence types and – whenever possible – vary the sentence function. Alternating between the different types not only keeps your reader engaged with your writing, it also allows you to emphasize the most important pieces of information and downplay less crucial material.

The following examples will help you learn how to vary your sentence openings:

1. Begin sentences with an appositive :

e.g. The forest ranger, an expert in forest fire control, talked to the campers about safety in the woods.

An expert in forest fire control, the forest ranger talked to the campers about safety in the woods.

2. Begin sentences with single-word modifiers :

e.g. The time for decision had finally come.

- *Finally*, the time for decision had come.(adv.)

3. Begin sentences with phrase modifiers :

e.g. Madame Curie was an industrious worker in the scientific laboratory.

In the scientific laboratory, Madame Curie was an industrious worker.(Prep Ph)

4. Begin sentences with clause modifiers :

e.g. The gardeners had to plant roses when it rained

When it rained, the gardeners had to plant roses.(adv.cl.)

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