Parallelism

Parallelism is a literary device which involves using pairs of word endings, words, and phrases to create balance and flow between ideas in a sentence. Parallelism can also involve repetition of key words, punctuation, and same numbers of syllables. These strategies actually create a sound or rhythm in the writing, making the words memorable like a song's tune that stays with a person throughout the day. Writers and orators use this literary device to develop interesting passages, to generate emphasis, to engage their readers, and to make lasting impressions.

Parallel structures create balance and grammatical correctness in the sentence structure; they eliminate awkwardness. Parallel verbs in compound sentences, joined with conjunctions, will maintain agreement, as will nouns that are closely related in their support of one idea.

- Flawed parallel: The new students were selecting their classes and have to pay their fees.
- Correct parallel: The new students were select**ing their classes** and pay**ing their fees**.

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

ING Verb Ending ↓ Parallel Verb Ending ↓

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The nouns ***classes*** and ***fees*** are closely related and are both in the plural. Notice that the pronoun ***their*** repeats.

With parallel structures each of the ideas has the same weight of importance. This balance of equivalents is useful when developing strong thesis statements that establish the essential elements that will be discussed as support for the paper's central idea. Likewise, parallelism is a very useful writing tool for developing conclusions that make a lasting impression on the reader. When concluding, the writer's use of parallelism reflects in equal measure on the impact of the topic's important elements, and it generates a memorable final comment.

- **Thesis example**:
  New students who wisely access support services experience a smoother college transition when **making friends**, **juggling responsibilities**, and **selecting appropriate courses**.

- **Concluding example**:
  Students who have utilized these supplemental programs discover that their willingness to rely on the expertise of others will bring **the rewards of new friends**, **the benefits of organization,** and **the satisfaction of academic success**.

Parallelism uses elements of repetition, but with variety***.*** Notice that in the concluding example above the words "the" and "of" repeat. However, the writer switches from the noun "rewards" to the corresponding nouns "benefits" and "satisfaction" to maintain ***unity with variety***. Use a thesaurus to find parallel words that sustain interest throughout the paper.

Parallelism is achieved in many ways. Examine these examples to find the parallel components:

Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

"Take the attitude of a student, never be too big to ask questions, never know too much to learn something new." Og Mandino.

To talk in public, to think in solitude, to read and to hear, to inquire and answer inquiries, is the business of the scholar." Samuel Johnson.