

Parallel Structure

Using the same sentence structure with two or more ideas

Why should you do this?

-When expressing two or more similar ideas in the same sentences, the ideas should follow the same structure. This signals to the reader that the items within the sentence are closely related. Using Parallel Structure will give your writing Rhythm, Emphasis, Balance, Impact, Crispness, and Conciseness.

“That sounds great...but, how do I do that?”

...By using *Parallel words, phrases, and clauses*

Parallel Words:

-These share the same part of speech and tense. And if making lists, use the same amount of items in each list.

-My date was *obnoxious, loud, and cheap*, no doubt he thought I was *gorgeous, personable, and witty*.

-We pleaded, begged, and prayed—to no avail.

Parallel Phrases:

-These create an underlying rhythm in your speech and writing. (Repeat some words in each of the phrases)

-“For taking away our Charters, abolishing our laws, and altering the Forms of our Government...” (Declaration of Independence)

-“Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need—not as a call to battle, though embattle we are—but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle...” (JFK’s inauguration speech)

Parallel Clauses:

-These can give you writing balance as well. (Repeat some words in each of the clauses)

~“Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay and price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.” (JFK’s inauguration speech)

~“Our chiefs are killed; Looking-Glass is dead; Ta-Hool-Shute is dead.”
(Chief Joesph’s surrender speech, 1877)

Look at these to really see the difference that Parallel Structure makes

Not parallel:

To avoid getting hit by lightning, never seek protection under a tree, lying down on wet ground, or not staying on a bike.

During a thunderstorm, people who are inside should not talk on the phone, standing near open windows, and using large appliances.

Parallel:

To avoid getting hit by lightning, never seek protection under a tree, lie down on we ground, or stay on a bike.

During a thunderstorm, people who are inside should not talk on the phone, stand near open windows, or use large appliances.

Since the phrases “match,” the sentences sound smoother and more logical. Plus, they are more balanced and less wordy