

**PARALLELISM**  
**Regis Writing Center**

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Parallelism is repeating the same word, phrase, clause, or sentence pattern (see examples below).

The most common reason to use parallelism is to provide clarity, but using parallel grammatical forms also provides rhythm and emphasis. For example, the sentence from the Gettysburg Address “But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate--we cannot consecrate--we cannot hallow--this ground” provides rhythm in the sentence. The deliberate repetition of parallel structures also provides emphasis. For example, the phrase “of the people, by the people, and for the people” from the Gettysburg Address emphasizes the word “people.”

Parallel grammatical structures can be linked with

- ▶ a conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet)
- ▶ a pair of correlative conjunctions (either/or, not only/but also, whether/or)
- ▶ a comparative expression (than, as).

**Parallel Words**

*Not Parallel:* Good studying and a thorough read will enable students to do well on tests.

*Parallel:* Good studying and thorough reading will enable students to do well on tests.

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*Not Parallel:* The restaurant was loud, crowded, and the atmosphere was busy.

*Parallel:* Not only was the restaurant loud, but it was also crowded and busy.

**Parallel Phrases**

*Not Parallel:* When playing hide-and-seek, the kids hid in the closet, under the bed, or covered themselves with a blanket.

*Parallel:* When playing hide-and-seek, the kids hid in the closet, under the bed, or beneath a blanket.

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*Not Parallel:* Myrtle enjoys cookies, when she is tickled, jumping rope, and the zoo.

*Parallel:* Myrtle enjoys eating cookies, being tickled, jumping rope, and going to the zoo.

## Parallel Clauses

*Not Parallel:* Students may not turn in assignments on time because they are too busy with other classes or a full social calendar.

*Parallel:* Students may not turn in assignments on time because they are too busy with other classes or because they have a full social calendar.

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*Not Parallel:* The employer decided that either the secretary would resign or be fired.

*Parallel:* The employer decided that either the secretary would resign or she would be fired.

## Parallel Sentences

*Not parallel:* When the sun came up, the sky was cloudy and rainy. At sunset, the sky had cleared.

*Parallel:* At daybreak, the sky was cloudy and rainy. At sunset, the sky had cleared.

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*Not parallel:* I know why I like skiing. I know why I like swimming. Basketball is also a favorite of mine.

*Parallel:* I know why I like skiing. I know why I like swimming. I know why I like basketball.

The non-parallel sentences are correct; however, repetition emphasizes the time element in the first example and the person in the second.

## Parallel Items in Lists or Outlines:

*Not Parallel:* Kids going to camp may expect the following:  
1) Being part of a sports team,  
2) Getting bitten by mosquitos,  
3) To run in the three-legged races.

*Parallel:* Kids going to camp may expect the following:  
1) Being part of a sports team,  
2) Getting bitten by mosquitos,  
3) Running in the three-legged races.