

- c. He longed to be free.
d. She liked the song.
e. They had a good time.
3. Using each of the basic statements below, write five periodic sentences *at least fifteen words long*. (See examples, page 112.)
- a. Mary left the room.
b. The world's greatest invention is the safety pin.
c. Hate is based on fear.
d. The man was dead.
e. The circus was his life.
4. Select five of the ten sentences you have just written and add details that will make each one a combination of strung-along and periodic.
5. Expand the subject of the sentence below in the seven different ways illustrated on page 116 (#1-7). Follow the patterns exactly.
- The old man shuffled out of sight.
6. Expand the verb of each of the following sentences.
- a. The girl walked across the playground.
b. The boy talked about fishing.
7. Add a simple appositive to the noun at the end of each sentence below:
- a. He liked the car.
b. John read the book.
c. They listened to the lecture.
d. It was a special chair.
e. He called the dog.
8. Using both prepositional phrases and participles, add detail to each of the appositives in the five sentences you have just written. Make each sentence *at least fifteen words long*.
9. Add an appositive and a *who* clause to the sentence below, following the pattern shown in #5, page 119.
- They asked for Mrs. Smith.
10. Write a sentence containing an appositive and a *so . . . that* comparison as shown in #6, page 119.

VOCABULARY

1. Define each of the following words:

adhering
arbitrarily
erratic

exorcised
implication
inexhaustible
irreducible

paradox
repetitive
subconscious

2. Below are the first few words of six incomplete sentences. Finish each of the sentences, using all of the following: (1) the word shown in parentheses with each; (2) an appositive; and (3) at least one prepositional phrase. The three items need not be used in the order given here, but all three must appear in each sentence.
- a. Although John had worked out a . . . (*adhering*)
b. He managed to . . . (*arbitrarily*)
c. The rhythm of . . . (*erratic*)
d. The ghosts . . . (*exorcised*)
e. We can only guess at . . . (*implication*)
f. The resources of . . . (*inexhaustible*)
3. Follow each of the statements below with a second statement that explains the first in different words.
- a. A basic statement is irreducible;
b. Writing that sounds natural is a paradox;
c. The speaker was needlessly repetitive;
d. His fear was subconscious;

10

Parallel Structure

Parallel structure, fully understood and put to use, can bring about such a startling change in composition that student writers sometimes refer to it as "instant style." It can add new interest, new tone, new and unexpected grace to even the most pedestrian piece of writing.

Unfortunately, a great many students (particularly those who were frightened by a grammar book early in life and

have never fully recovered) never master parallelism simply because they are scared off by the definition. It's a definition cast in grammatical terms because it deals with a grammatical structure. The grammar-shy student takes one look at it and falls into a faint, sure that he has met the evil eye itself.

The irony of this is that the definition of parallel structure is actually a good deal harder to understand than parallel structure itself. The sensible thing to do, therefore, is to ignore the definition for the time being and to learn parallel structure the way you learned to talk—by listening to it.

Look for the Common Denominator

Parallelisms range all the way from the very simple to the extremely complex, but they all have one thing in common. You should have little difficulty finding this common denominator in the following examples:

1. He was the kind of man who knew what he wanted, who intended to get it, and who allowed nothing to stand in his way.
2. He wanted to walk out, to get in his car and drive forever, to leave and never come back.
3. They went to London, to Paris, to Rome.
4. He felt that Mary had changed, that she had moved into another world, and that she had left him behind.
5. If we are to survive, if we are to have even the hope of surviving, we must end the nuclear race.
6. To know you are right is one thing; to prove it, quite another.

The common denominator, of course, is the repetition of some element in the sentence. It is *not*, you will notice, the repetition of an idea.

A parallelism does not say the same thing in different words. The repetition is a repetition of structure.

Look at #1. In this, the *who* clause is repeated: the man *who knew, who intended, who allowed*. Each clause makes a separate point, but each has the same structure.

In #2, the infinitive (*to* plus verb) repeats itself: *to walk, to get, to leave*.

In #3, it's the prepositional phrase: *to London, to Paris, to Rome*.

In #4, it's the *that* clause (commonly called a noun clause):

that Mary had changed, that she had moved, that she had left. Notice that the tense of the verb remains the same, although the verb itself changes.

In #5, the repetition is an *if* clause. This is an economical method, by the way, of setting up all the *if*'s in any kind of proposition—rather a handy thing to have around if you are working with an “iffy” sort of thesis, particularly as you sum up an argument: “If, then, such-and-such is true, if so-and-so is right, if the situation is thus, then . . .” The repeated structure lends grace to logic, and the sentence resolves itself into a triumphant final flourish.

The last one, #6, is an example of a “balanced sentence.” The infinitives *to know* and *to prove* are parallel, and the two clauses are balanced on either side of a semicolon. Since both clauses deal with the same idea (rightness), it is not necessary to repeat the first clause in its entirety. In fact, the abruptness of the second clause adds emphasis.

Balance, of course, is always inherent in parallelism. Various parts of the sentence balance themselves against each other, weight for weight. Phrase balances with phrase, clause with clause, idea with idea, thus creating a strong and satisfying sense of interior wholeness in a sentence.

The foregoing examples represent only a fraction of the parallels possible with the English language. The more you practice, the more ways you will discover. You can, for example, use a doubtful parallel:

If we are to survive, if we are to have even the hope of surviving, we must end the nuclear race, and we must end it soon.

Or you can place whole sentences in parallel position, even whole paragraphs. You can use parallels within parallels, in patterns of increasing intricacy. The main thing is to begin.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Complete the unfinished sentence below with a series of *who* clauses:

He always made trouble. He was the kind of boy who . . .

2. Complete with a series of infinitive phrases, using a different infinitive for each phrase:

To be popular, she thought, she needed only to . . .

3. Using *to* as your preposition, complete this sentence with a series of prepositional phrases:

In desperate search for a cure, he went to . . .

4. Using *of* as your preposition, complete this sentence with a series of prepositional phrases:

She was afraid of everything, of . . .

5. Complete this with a series of *that* clauses:

He complained that the children made too much noise, that . . .

6. Write a sentence beginning with three *if* clauses.
7. Write a sentence ending with three *if* clauses.
8. Complete the sentence below by *interrupting* it with two parallel *if* clauses:

The problem of race relations, if . . . , and if . . . , must be solved.

9. Write a balanced sentence modeled on #6 on page 124 but using different infinitives.
10. Write a sentence that contains a double parallel.

The Smaller Parallels

The parallels you have studied so far have been stylistic, or literary, and therefore relatively sophisticated. In effect, you have started your study of parallels at the top, on the theory that this provides the best possible vantage point for watching operations at ground level—the small, simple parallels used every day in all kinds of writing.

These smaller parallels are exceedingly important, for any big, swooping parallel—like a bridge—needs solid support on the ground.

Whenever a sentence contains two or more similar elements, these elements must be kept parallel, no matter how small they are.

In a series of nouns, for example, each item must be a noun. In a series of adjectives, each item must be an adjective; and so forth:

Nouns:

Not: She liked ball games, hootenannies, hikes, and going to picnics.

But: She liked ball games, hootenannies, hikes, and *picnics*.

That “going to” in the first example throws the whole parallel out of kilter. It’s the kind of awkwardness that hits a reader’s ear like the squawk of an unoiled hinge. Watch out for similar jarring notes in the following:

Adjectives:

Not: He was lazy, good-humored, likeable, and sort of a crook.

But: He was lazy, good-humored, likeable, and *slightly crooked*.

Adverbs:

Not: She walked steadily and in a big hurry.

But: She walked steadily and *swiftly*.

Verbs:

Not: She combed her hair, powdered her nose, and her lipstick was checked.

But: She combed her hair, powdered her nose, and *checked her lipstick*.

Suppose you are one of those students so impervious to grammar that you can’t tell an adverb from an aardvark. You can still keep your parallels lined up. Use your ear and your common sense. You can tell whether words need to be alike or not. Take it from there.

The same principle operates in relation to pairs. Pairs are usually balanced on either side of *and*, *but*, and *or*. Keep them equal, as shown in the corrections below:

He was an expert driver and could also repair cars.
(driver and *mechanic*)

He was intelligent but a boring boy. (intelligent but *boring*; or, *a brain* but *a bore*)

Her ambition was to act in movies and playing certain roles. (to act in movies and *to play* . . .)

She wanted either money or to be famous. (money or *fame*)

It's always a good idea to take a sharp look at what you use with *and*, *but*, and *as well as*, particularly at the tail end of a sentence. That's where the slippage is likely to occur:

The trip into town had been both difficult and a great expense. (both difficult and *expensive*)

He wanted to pour all his effort into the job, to do it well, but keeping the time down as much as possible. (but *to do it quickly*)

She worked hard to maintain her high grades, but she yearned for popularity as well as being recognized as a good student. (for popularity as well as *academic success*)

Some of the trickiest parallels to control are those using *either/or*, *neither/nor*, *not only/but also*, and *first/second/third*. The first two pairs, particularly, are tricky:

Not: Either I'm always in debt or in trouble.

But: Either I'm always in debt or I'm always in trouble.
or

I'm always either in debt or in trouble.

Not: She is the kind of woman who will neither change her mind nor her hair style.

But: She is the kind of woman who will change neither her mind nor her hair style.

The easiest way to check these two for proper position is to call a halt, mentally, immediately after *either* or *neither* and check the weight on both sides of *or* or *nor*:

I'm always either in debt or in trouble.
She could be neither kind nor cruel.

The weight must be the same on both sides. Word balances word, phrase balances phrase. The same principle governs *not only/but also*:

That will scare not only Sally but also the cat.
They hoped to go not only to London but also to Paris.

The problem with *first/second/third* is that one item can easily slip out of line: "First, the photography is poor; second, the sound track is below average; third, I don't think it's in very good taste." That last item is, of course, out of parallel; write "third, the whole thing is in poor taste," and it falls into line.

The first item in any series sets the pattern, and all other items must conform to it. The first item in the following example is a *that* clause; therefore, *that* must be repeated after *second* and *third*:

After he entered college he realized clearly, first, that he should have worked harder in high school; second, that he would have to work hard now to keep up; and third, that he could succeed only by learning self-discipline.

Compare this example with #4 on page 124. Structurally they are exactly the same. The only difference is that here the clauses are numbered. The structure is brought to your attention again because you may get so involved with numbering that you forget about keeping the items parallel.

The smallest of all the parallels has been kept until last—the use of articles (*a*, *an*, *the*) and prepositions (*to*, *by*, *for*, *from*, etc.) in a series. The rule:

If you repeat an article or a preposition once, repeat it every time—or not at all.

For example:

A house, a yard, a garden, and a pool.

or

A house, yard, garden, and pool.

For love, for honor, for fame, or for money.

or

For love, honor, fame, or money.

Summary

Some parallels are a matter of simple logic. Controlling them is mainly a housekeeping chore, a necessary straightening and tidying-up that every writer learns to do as a matter of course, as part of his job. The subtler and more complex parallels are the real challenge and the true delight of writing. Requiring the most artful balance of many elements, they are exciting things to handle; but even more exciting is the immediate and startling improvement they can make in your writing style.

Parallelism on any level is simply, in the final analysis, control. Keep all elements of equal value parallel, whether they are big elements or small, and your sentences can't straggle off raggedly this way and that. They will have the

sense of wholeness and balance, of architectural soundness, that pleases the ear and satisfies the mind.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the best way to learn parallel structure?
2. Parallelism "is a repetition of *structure*." Explain.
3. Give an example of a balanced sentence.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Each of the sentences below contains some kind of faulty parallelism. Rewrite each sentence correctly.
 - a. She planned a trip to the country, a visit with her grandmother, and taking long hikes with her cousin.
 - b. The old man was gentle, kind, and gave away a lot of money to the poor.
 - c. He put the model airplane together neatly, accurately, and with a great deal of skill.
 - d. The boy wiped the windshield, cleaned off the dirty headlights, polished the chrome trim, and even the hub-caps were checked.
 - e. She was a good cook and also kept house well.
 - f. She was beautiful but a spoiled child.
 - g. He hoped either to be elected president of his class or make the highest grades.
 - h. He was intelligent as well as having a lot of friends.
 - i. He had to have the suit both altered and to have it cleaned.
 - j. The thing he most looked forward to was a hot meal and having a hot bath.
 - k. He enjoyed going to the movies as well as trips to the theater.
 - l. Either the boys disliked or ignored him.
 - m. That girl will neither take advice from her parents nor her friends.
 - n. Their purpose was not only to take special courses in science but in art.
 - o. The committee is not only working hard to preserve historical landmarks but is also interested in developing a local museum.
 - p. They believe that a museum will promote greater interest in local history, that it will enrich the lives of

school children in the community, and will become a major tourist attraction.

- q. Many students believe that to be popular is happiness.
 - r. Study develops the mind; exercise develops the body; and understanding is developed by experience.
 - s. He made it clear, first, that he had no faith in the project; second, that he would not support it; and that, third, he would advise his friends against it.
 - t. They arrived in town by bus, by train, by plane, and even walking.
2. President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address contained a number of striking parallelisms. Find at least five in the selections from the Address, below. Copy them exactly.

We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom, symbolizing an end as well as a beginning, signifying renewal as well as change. . . .

. . . Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans, born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage, and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

So let us begin anew, remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.

Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are; but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation," a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.

And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

3. Below is a description of an animal lab. Choose a subject of your own—perhaps a library, a dormitory, a restaurant, any place you have observed closely—and write a description that imitates the passage below. Match its sentence structure, parallels, figures of speech, etc., with suitable constructions of your own.

The animal lab is full of strange, muted sounds. Somewhere down the hall, behind closed doors, monkeys gossip incessantly, their voices thin, bored, faintly exasperated,

like the voices of empty-headed office girls on an endless coffee break. Now and then a lemur's cry—high, sweet, full of grief and hope—breaks through the monkeys' mindless chatter. And something else whispers in the air, a small rustling and scuttling sound, anciently familiar and vaguely disquieting: rats are nearby.

They are, in fact, nearby in great numbers, in the big colony room. These are elegant rats, refined rats, plump and docile and immaculate, white of fur and innocently pink of claw and tail. Science has bred out of them nearly every resemblance to their ugly ancestors. These placid aristocrats have never seen a ship's hold, or a garbage dump, or a littered alley; they have never run from snapping dogs nor crept at night through secret tunnels in the walls of decayed tenements. But they still make, in their clean wire cages, the ageless sound that rats in movement have always made.

4. Select a student from your class in composition (preferably a student you do *not* know well) and write a description of him (or her). Do this assignment during class, while you can actually observe your subject. Give enough concrete detail to make him recognizable, but do not give his name.

In addition to actual physical description, indicate also the kind of person you think your subject might be, guessing at his inner thoughts, his ambitions, his attitudes. This will take some imagination. Except for literal description, you will be treating your subject almost as a fictional character. Use third person only. And finally, *use at least one example of each kind of parallel structure shown in examples #1-6 on page 124.*

VOCABULARY

1. Define the following words:

disquieting	inherent
docile	intricacy
immaculate	pedestrian
impervious	vantage

2. Choose the word from the above list that most nearly fits the meaning of each sentence below:

- The pattern in the lace was extremely delicate and complex, a web of leaves and flowers interwoven with gold thread.
- An iron-willed man, he could not be reached by any appeal to his emotions.

- From the attic window they had a splendid view of everything that went on in the street.
- Every word, every gesture suggested a strong instinct for drama.
- She was quiet, submissive, and willing to learn.
- His writing style is quite ordinary.
- His white shirt was spotlessly clean.
- She refused to believe the rumor, but it made her uneasy.

3. Using all the words in the vocabulary list above, write four sentences, each containing one of the parallelisms illustrated in examples #1-6 on page 124.

11

A Way with Words

You have spent a great deal of time learning some rather difficult techniques of style. Now it behooves you to see to it that you have a vocabulary worthy of those techniques.

Don't expect to write well with a vocabulary limited to the perfectly familiar—and therefore perfectly easy—words you already know. It can't be done, and the sooner you face that hard fact the faster your progress will be. Other things being equal, the bigger your vocabulary, the better your writing. It's a matter of simple arithmetic. The more words you know, the more choices you can make; and the more choices you can make, the better chance you have of finding the exact word you need at any given time—what the French call *le mot juste*, the word that fits precisely the thought you want to express.

You have been working regularly with vocabulary assignments, but you should begin now, if you have not already done so, to intensify your efforts to improve and enlarge your word supply. Don't waste your time envying the lucky few who, through wide reading or constant association with unusually fluent people, already have large vocabularies. Yours can be just as large, or larger. Don't try to find excuses for a poor vocabulary (I'm too dumb, I'm too busy, I've got other things on my mind). A poor vocabulary can't be excused—not in this day and age. It can only be explained. And the explanation can be summed up in one word: laziness. If you