

## Use Parallel Structures Effectively

When you express two or more ideas that are equal in emphasis, use parallel grammatical structures: nouns with nouns, infinitives with infinitives, adverb clauses with adverb clauses. The parallel structures clearly and emphatically indicate parallel ideas.

**Effective:** The hero is destroyed by his own strength, devoured by his own hunger, and impoverished by his own wealth. (parallel verb phrases)

**Effective:** It may be better, Eliot said, to do evil than to do nothing. (infinitive phrases)

**Effective:** Because of its acute hearing, because of its playful imagination, and most of all because of its amazing intelligence, the dolphin is a rare creature of the sea. (introductory phrases)

**\*\*In parallel structures, use only equal grammatical constructions.**

A common error among inexperienced writers is faulty parallelism--treating unlike grammatical structures as if they were parallel. This practice upsets the balance that the reader expects in a coordinate structure. Below are some of the more common types of faulty parallelisms:

**Faulty:** Denise has two great ambitions: to act and becoming a director.

**Correct:** Denise has two great ambitions: to act and to direct. (or....acting and directing)

**Faulty:** Myron is intelligent, charming, and knows how to dress.

**Correct:** Myron is intelligent, charming, and well dressed.

**\*\* Repeat necessary words to make all parallels clear to the reader**

Awkward, confusing sentences often result if you do not repeat needed prepositions, signs of infinitives (*to*), auxiliary verbs, or other words needed to make the parallel clear:

**Faulty:** Central Florida is well known for its family-oriented attractions, such as Disney World, and its beaches, citrus groves, and retirement centers.

**Correct:** Central Florida is well known **for** its family-oriented attractions, such as Disney World, and for its beaches, citrus groves, and retirement centers.

**Faulty:** Mr. Simmons, the counselor, told Carmelita that she should be more realistic and dropping one course would not ruin her record.

**Correct:** Mr. Simmons, the counselor, told Carmelita **that** she should be more realistic **and that** dropping one course would not ruin her record.

**\*\*Always use parallel structures with correlative conjunctions such as both...and or neither...nor.**

Use correlative conjunctions to connect two closely related ideas; use the same grammatical form for both ideas. The most common correlatives are *both...and*, *either...or*, *not only...but also*, *whether...or*.