

# Parallelism //

## What is parallelism?

- 1) Repeating grammatical structures (the same parts of speech, phrases, or clauses)
- 2) Repeating certain key words on purpose (to provide continuity)

## When should it be used?

- 3) For similar ideas, to emphasize their similarity
- 4) For contrasting ideas, to emphasize their differences
- 5) In lists, especially long ones in which each item has several words
- 6) In long sentences, to make them clear and easy to read
- 7) To lend grace and rhythm to your style
- 8) In sentence elements joined by coordinating conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) or correlative conjunctions (*either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also, both/and*) because these conjunctions imply that each element is of equal importance and therefore parallel
- 9) In introductions and conclusions, to emphasize your most important ideas
- 10) In your thesis statement, to outline your subtopics (an “essay map”)
- 11) You may also choose to change up parallel structure to emphasize one idea, as in this famous phrase from *The Declaration of Independence*: “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”  
The third item in the list is not parallel to the first two, so it stands out.

## A Few Famous Examples of Parallelism:

“...they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn”

-Romans 12:15

“Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the success of liberty....And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man”

-John F. Kennedy, *Inaugural Address*, Jan. 20, 1961.