

Parallel Structure

Definition of Parallel Structure

Parallel structure is a stylistic device, and a grammatical construction having two or more clauses, phrases or words, with similar grammatical form and length. It is similar to [parallelism](#). In parallel structure, sentences have a series of phrases or clauses, which start and end in almost a similar fashion, by keeping the [rhythm](#) of the lines. These structures are repetitions that offer an enjoyable time for the readers to absorb and understand ideas, facts, and concepts.

Everyday Examples of Parallel Structure

Many people like riding, hiking, biking, and swimming.
The teacher told the students that they need to get up early in the morning, that they need to sleep properly, and that they need to eat properly.
The cat runs across the garden, jumps over to the plant, and moves down the road.

Examples of Parallel Structure in Literature

Example #1: *Good Faith* (by Jane Smiley)

“I had been short, and now I was tall. I had been skinny and quiet and religious, and now I was good-looking and muscular. It was Sally Baldwin who brought me along, told me what to wear and do and think and say. She was never wrong; she never lost her patience. She created me, and when she was done we broke up in a formal sense, but she kept calling me.”

You can see how perfectly the author has repeated and emphasized the first two lines in the above paragraph. The author has combined several elements, but given them a balance by parallel clauses.

Example #2: *Goodbye to Forty-Eighth Street* (by E.B. White)

“The wheels wheeled, the chairs spun, the cotton candy tinted the faces of children, the bright leaves tinted the woods and hills. A cluster of amplifiers spread the [theme](#) of love over everything and everybody; the mild breeze spread the dust over everything and everybody. Next morning, in the Lafayette Hotel in Portland, I went down to breakfast and found May Craig looking solemn at one of the tables and Mr. Murray, the auctioneer, looking cheerful at another.”

The above paragraph shows parallel structures. They not only give a balance, but also a grace to the passage by enhancing its readability.

Example #3: *Of Studies* (by Francis Bacon)

“Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and [discourse](#); but to weigh and consider.”

In these lines, the parallel structures use [repetition](#) to lay emphasis, and help the readers to memorize the sentences easily.

Example #4: *Great Expectations* (by Charles Dickens)

“A fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars... and glared and growled; and

This excerpt presents a perfect example of parallel structure, describing a convict who becomes Magwitch. Notice that the first three sentences, which start in a similar way, while the next phrases follow another, similar structure.

Example #5: *Still Life with Woodpecker* (by Tom Robbins)

“Humanity has advanced, when it has advanced, not because it has been sober, responsible, and cautious, but because it has been playful, rebellious, and immature.”

This is another excellent example of parallel structure. These structures give rhythm to sentences and leaving them grammatically balanced.

Example #6: *We Real Cool* (by Gwendolyn Brooks)

We real cool. We

Left school. We

Lurk late. We

Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We

Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We

Die soon.

The parallel structures in this short poem give it a little waltz and jingle feel. Each parallel sentence follows a basic pattern, starting with pronouns and ending with nouns and adverbs, except the first line, which ends with an adjective.

Function of Parallel Structure

Parallel structure creates fluency in writing and enhances readability, as it uses patterns of words in a way that readers can easily follow, and relate

and advertising. It also lends consistency to professional writing, as it provides rhythm and balance that lead the readers to the exact idea, without any misguidance. In addition, parallel structures synchronize, repeat and emphasize the words and thoughts of the writers.