

**Parallelism** is a rhetorical and grammatical device where a writer or speaker uses similar grammatical structures to express similar ideas. It involves using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. This technique creates a sense of balance, rhythm, and clarity in writing and speech.

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### How Parallelism Works

The core of parallelism is **consistency in form**. This means that if you use a noun in one part of a list or comparison, you should use a noun in the other parts as well. The same applies to verb forms, clauses, and phrases.

- **Words:** All words in a list are the same part of speech.
  - **Incorrect:** The students were asked to run, to swim, and biking. (run and swim are infinitives, but "biking" is a gerund).
  - **Correct:** The students were asked to **to run, to swim, and to bike**. (All are infinitives).
- **Phrases:** All phrases in a list have the same structure.
  - **Incorrect:** She is a talented writer, a skilled painter, and someone who sings beautifully.
  - **Correct:** She is a **talented writer, a skilled painter, and a beautiful singer**. (All are noun phrases).
- **Clauses:** All clauses are of the same type.
  - **Incorrect:** I love not only eating pizza but also when I get to eat tacos.
  - **Correct:** I love not only **eating pizza** but also **eating tacos**. (Both are gerund phrases).

### Why Use Parallelism?

1. **Clarity and Readability:** Parallel structures make sentences easier to read and understand by creating a clear, logical flow. The consistent pattern helps the reader process information more efficiently.
2. **Rhetorical Power:** In speeches and persuasive writing, parallelism creates rhythm and emphasis, making the ideas more memorable and impactful. Famous examples include Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech and the opening of the Declaration of Independence.
3. **Aesthetic Appeal:** The balance and symmetry of parallel construction are pleasing to the ear and eye, contributing to the overall elegance of the prose.

### Parallelism in Famous Examples

- "Ask not **what your country can do for you**—ask **what you can do for your country**." - John F. Kennedy
  - This is a classic example of using parallel clauses to create a memorable and powerful rhetorical statement.

- **"I came, I saw, I conquered."** - Julius Caesar
  - The simple, repeating verb structure makes this phrase feel strong and decisive.
- **"That government of the people, by the people, for the people** shall not perish from the earth."  
- Abraham Lincoln
  - This triple repetition of the prepositional phrase "of the people," "by the people," and "for the people" creates a powerful and unifying rhythm.

