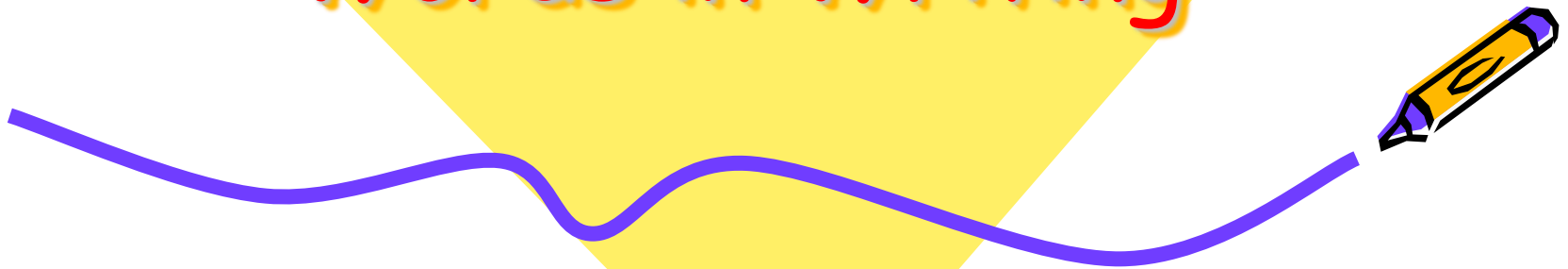
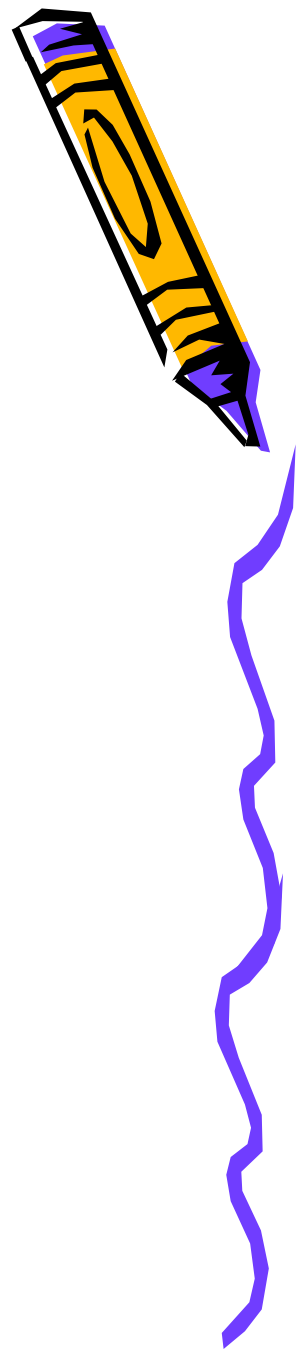




# Using Parallel Structure And Avoiding The Repetition of Words in Writing



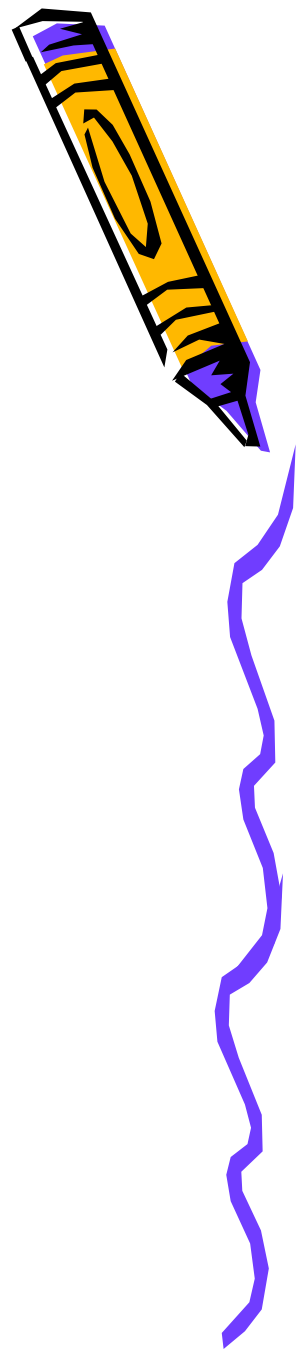
Is there anything wrong with the following sentence?



- Martin felt the movie was boring, silly, and was too long.



Did you ever pick up a book and read something like this:



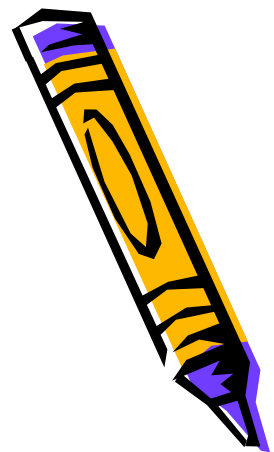
- Carol picked up her books.
- Carol picked up her pens.
- Carol picked up her jacket.



Although there are some situations where this form of writing is necessary (maybe for emphasis), it is usually not necessary to repeat words over and over again.

We can write the previous sentences like this:

- Carol picked up her books, pens, and jacket.





Taking out repetitive words and combining similar sentences and ideas is called **parallel structure**, **parallel construction**, and **parallelism**.

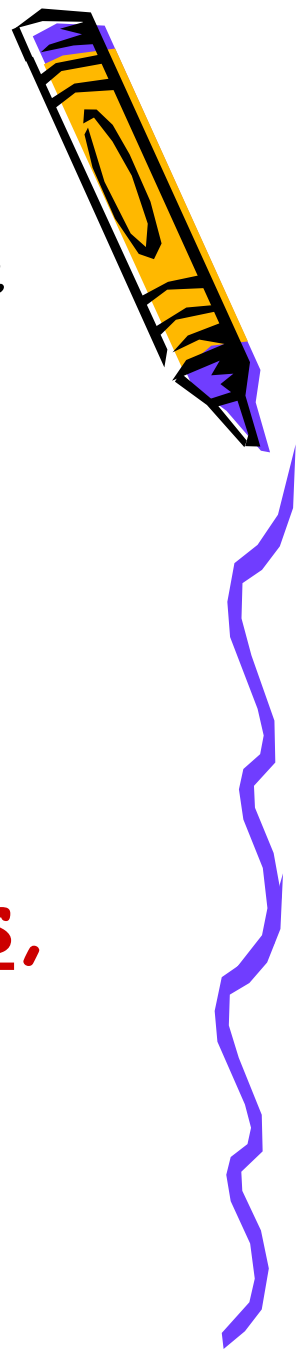
In **parallel structure**, it is important to group similar ideas and items together.

- For example, in the three sentences given, the words **Carol picked up her...** repeat. Additionally, the words that do NOT repeat are all nouns: **books**, **pens**, and **jacket**. Since **books**, **pens**, and **jacket** are all nouns, they can be grouped together.

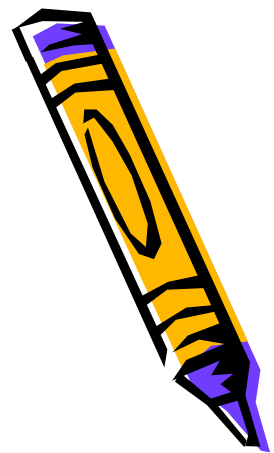


When using parallel structure, the main rule to remember is that the things in the list must be the same grammatical form. This is best summed up in the following:

- The items in the list must be all nouns, all infinitives, all prepositional phrases, all gerunds, or all clauses.



## Here is another example:



- There are trains leaving the station in the morning and noon.
- The preposition is **in**. When proofreading, ask yourself, "Is this the correct word for each item?"
- **In** the morning? **YES!**
- **In** noon? **NO!** The correct preposition for **noon** is **at**. Therefore, we must write
- There are trains leaving the station **in** the morning and **at** noon.



Some words and verbs use prepositions as well. Look at this example:

- The cancer researcher is interested and excited about the new advances in medical technology.
- What are the words in the parallel structure? They are **interested** and **excited**. When the writer wrote **excited**, she also correctly wrote **about**. How about **interested**? Do you use **about** with **interested**?
- Let's do the proofreading test that we learned earlier.





excited about the advances...? YES!

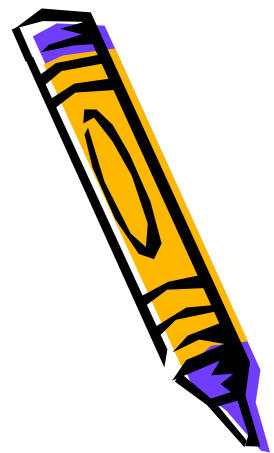
interested about the advances...? NO!

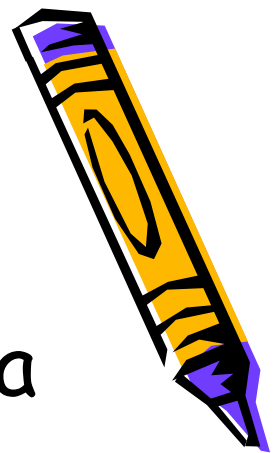
- The correct preposition used with **interested** is **in**. Therefore, the previous sentence is **INCORRECT**. The correct preposition must be used in each item of the parallel structure.
- The following is correct:
- The cancer researcher is **interested in** and **excited about** the new advances in medical technology.



# Take a look at this sentence:

- Paula went to work, a restaurant, and to the movies.
- If the preposition or article (a, an, the) is the same for all items in the list, the writer can decide to include them in all of the items or write it just in the first. Therefore, the above sentence is incorrect. The items in the list are **work, a restaurant, and the movies.** However, the writer used the preposition **to** with the first and third items only.





- **INCORRECT:** Paula went to work, a restaurant, and to the movies.
- **CORRECT:** Paula went to work, a restaurant, and the movies.
- **CORRECT:** Paula went to work, to a restaurant, and to the movies.



Remember the rule of parallel structure: the words in the list must be the same grammatical form



• INCORRECT

In counseling, I think both **talking** and **to listen** are important.

We are not **for war** but **peace**.

This car is not only **fast** but also it is **safe to drive**.

The trip to the city is neither **a long one** nor **expensive**.

Either **you must stay home** or **go with us**.



• CORRECT

In counseling, I think both **talking** and **listening** are important.

We are not **for war** but **for peace**.

This car is not only **fast** but also **safe**.

The trip to the city is neither **long** nor **expensive**.

You must either **stay home** or **go with us**.

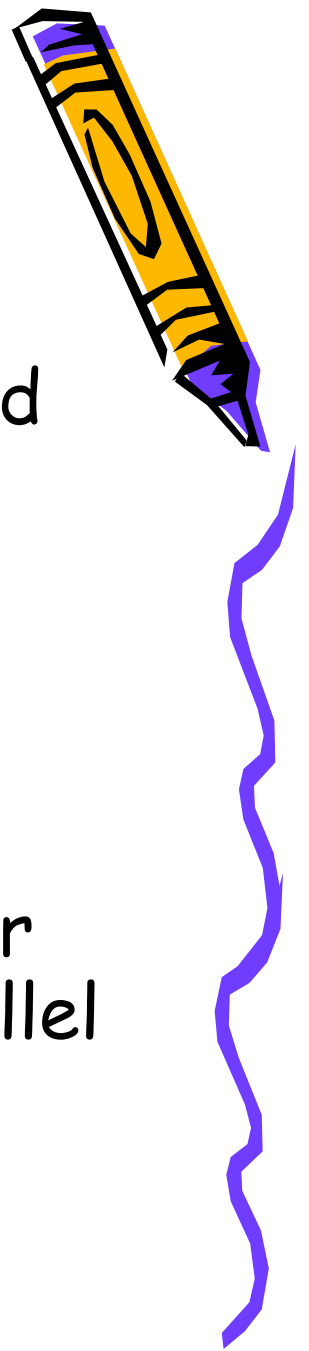


So what's the problem with the first sentence in this lesson?

- Martin felt the movie was boring, silly, and was too long.
- The words in the list of items are not the same: **boring** and **silly** are adjectives; however, **was too long** begins with a verb.



# Rules to Remember!



- 1. Parallel structure is sometimes called parallel construction and parallelism.
- 2. When using parallel structure, the items in the list must be all nouns, all infinitives, all prepositional phrases, all gerunds, or all clauses.
- 3. It is important to know the rules for commas and semicolons when using parallel structure.

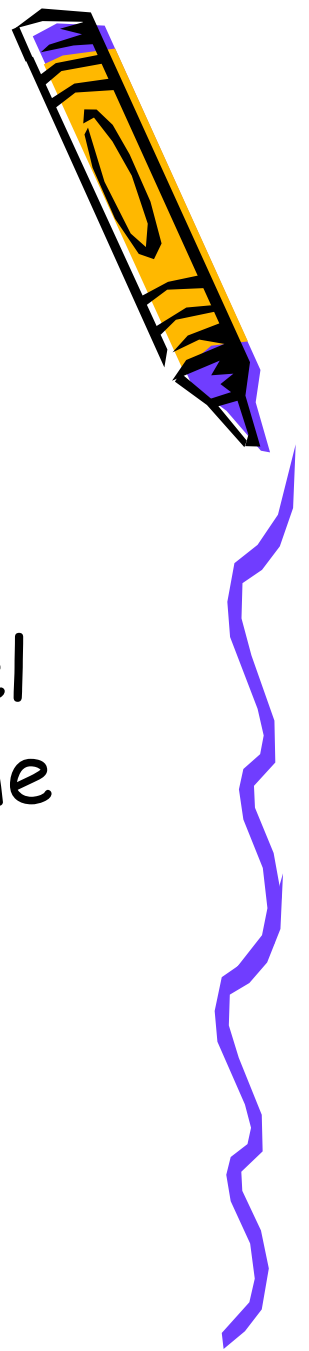


# Parallel Structure in Outlining

Outlines should follow parallel structure. Following a parallel structure forces you to think about word choices and will help you to avoid issues with parallelism when writing the actual paper.



# Parallel Structure in Outlining



- Each main point should follow the same grammatical structure.
- Each supporting point within a level of an outline should follow the same grammatical structure as other points within that level of the outline.





# Examine the following basic outline:



- I. Gather supplies
- II. How to measure
- III. You should mix ingredients.

Does this outline follow a parallel structure?

Answer: No

Why? - Each point begins with a different part of speech or different format.



Examine the following basic outline:

I. Gather supplies

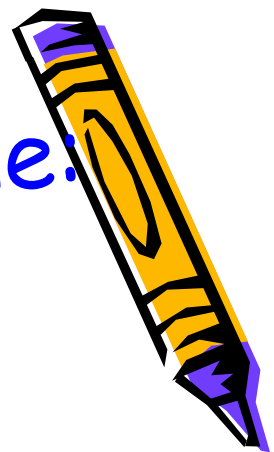
II. Measure ingredients

III. Mix ingredients

Does this outline follow a parallel structure?

Answer: Yes

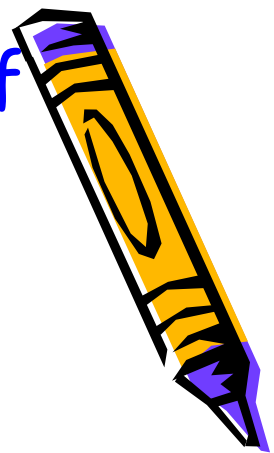
Why? - Each main point starts with the same part of speech = a verb.



# Examine the following outline on the topic of chivalry:

- I. Ideals
  - A. Horsemanship
  - B. Servant
  - C. Defender of honor
  - D. Provider to church
- II. Training
  - A. Page
    - 1. Learned religion
    - 2. Taught respect for lord
    - 3. Learned to obey
    - 4. Served lord in battle
  - B. Squire
    - 1. Practiced in armor
    - 2. Learned endurance
    - 3. Served knight in battle

Notice how each section follows parallel structure.



Does parallelism make  
sense now?

Great! Let's Practice!

