When writing sentences, ideas need to be expressed in the same grammatical form. In other words, nouns should be paired with nouns, verbs with verbs, phrases with phrases, and clauses with clauses.

**What one is looking for in parallel structure is a balance between or among ideas.**

**EXAMPLES OF PARALLEL IDEAS EXPRESSED IN SENTENCES:**

1. When a man is interested in improving his physique, he **exercises** daily, **maintains** a special diet, and **gets** eight hours of sleep.

   In the sentence, three verbs (exercises, maintains, and gets) are all in present tense and are joined by the conjunction **and**.

2. The lab assistant noticed an **increase** in the cost of supplies but a **decrease** in the number of supplies needed.

   In this sentence two nouns—increase and decrease—are joined by the conjunction **but**.

3. His testimony revealed **that** he was not at home on the night in question and **that** he had no believable alibi.

   The following dependent clauses were joined by the conjunction **and**:

   - that he was not at home on the night in question
   - that he had no believable alibi

4. It is a well-known fact that she was **talented**, **beautiful**, and **honest**.

   Three adjectives—talented, beautiful, honest—are joined by the conjunction **and**.

Perhaps if you read and re-read these sentences, you will notice a particular rhythm (balance) that the writer has created. **Correct parallel structure creates a balance, a feeling that all the elements flow together.** If your writing “sounds funny,” you may find that it contains faulty parallelism.

**FAULTY PARALLELISM**

**Sentences are not parallel when one or more elements are in a different form.** For instance, a noun may be incorrectly joined to a verb. **A lack of parallel structure is called faulty parallelism.**
EXAMPLES OF SENTENCES WITH FAULTY PARALLELISM

1. Antonio walked to the store, but running home.

   The two verbs walked and running are in different tenses. The faulty parallel structure can be corrected by using the past tense for both verbs.

   Antonio walked to the store, but ran home.

2. As the store manager interviewed potential new employees, he evaluated their aptitude for being on time, enthusiastic, and their responsibility.

   This sentence contains faulty parallelism because being on time is a phrase (a group of words), enthusiastic is an adjective, and responsibility is a noun. None of the elements are the same part of speech. One way to correct the faulty parallelism is to change all the elements to verb forms.

   As the store manager interviewed potential new employees, he evaluated their aptitude for being on time, showing enthusiasm, and assuming responsibility.

   Another solution is to change each element to a noun.

   As the store manager interviewed potential new employees, he evaluated their aptitude for punctuality, enthusiasm, and responsibility.

3. Some managers like to hire teenagers because of their high energy level, but other managers believe that teenagers are too playful and they eat too much.

   This sentence is not parallel because it joins a linking verb and adjective, are too playful, to an independent clause, they eat too much. One way to revise the sentence is to change both elements to verbs.

   Some managers like to hire teenagers because of their high energy level, but other managers believe that teenagers play excessively and eat too much.

If you learn to review each element of your sentences for parallel structure, you will find that your sentences will sound better because each element is balanced by another. Now you try it.

Revised Summer 2012
Exercise 1: Re-write the following sentences using parallel structure so that the ideas are expressed in similar form.

1. Summers in Jacksonville are usually very hot and high humidity.

2. John is so talented -- a math instructor, writes poetry, and he plays a violin in the symphony.

3. Salty, who moves constantly but overweight, is a great dog.

4. In that particular job, one must tutor math, create learning packets, and he is responsible for scheduling student help.

5. Did you notice that ice had formed on the trees? It was on the porch and the sidewalk as well.

6. Pam is a loving mother, an affectionate wife, and has a real dedication towards teaching.

7. I would rather work in the yard than cooking.

8. He is man of great talent and who is most intelligent.

9. Every morning of our vacation, it either rained or there was snow.

10. The content of his papers was not only phrased well, but also they had great punctuation.

11. At one point in his life Dr. Dean tried teaching but later in his life turning to the practice of medicine.

12. The cars which are produced today may be expensive to purchase, but the cost to operate them is cheap.

13. The poor students neither understood the professor’s instructions, nor what his purpose.

14. He finally made the decision to go to college and what he would major in.

15. The entire class made the decision that his expectations were legitimate, that his lectures were interesting, and he had a very fair grading system.
PARALLEL STRUCTURE

16. The college can increase its revenue by either reducing the number of adjuncts or to curtail supply orders.

17. The material was written by a student, but an instructor delivered the speech.

18. Would you prefer to be remembered as exciting and enthusiastic or one who is usually filled with dullness?

19. David is regarded as reckless, handsome, and not to be trusted.

20. Now you should recognize parallel structure and writing well-constructed sentences.

(THE ANSWERS MAY BE FOUND ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES):
Answers: Exercise 1

Your sentences may vary from those listed below, but they should contain elements that are the same part of speech or of similar construction.

1. Summers in Jacksonville are usually very hot and often very humid.

2. John is so talented; he teaches math, writes poetry and plays the violin for the symphony.

3. Salty is a great dog who moves constantly, but is overweight.

4. In that particular job, one must tutor math, create learning packets, and schedule student help.

5. Did you notice ice had formed on the trees as well as the on the porch and sidewalk.

6. Pam is a loving mother, an affectionate wife, and a dedicated teacher.

7. I would rather work in the yard than cook in the kitchen.

8. He is a man with great talent and high intelligence.

9. Every morning on our vacation, it either rained or snowed.

10. The content of his paper was not only phrased well but also punctuated correctly.

11. At one point in his life Dr. Dean tried teaching; however, later in his life, he turned to the practice of medicine.

12. The cars produced today may be expensive to purchase but cheap to operate.

13. The poor students did not understand the professor’s instructions or his purpose.

14. He finally made the decision to go to college and chose a major.

15. The entire class decided that his expectations were legitimate, his lectures were interesting, and his grading system was fair.
16. The college can increase its revenue by either reducing the number of adjuncts or curtailing the supply order.

17. The material was written by a student, and the speech was delivered by an instructor.

Or

A student wrote the material, but an instructor delivered the speech.

18. Would you prefer to be remembered as exciting and enthusiastic or as dull?

19. David is regarded as reckless, handsome, and untrustworthy.

20. Now you should recognize parallel structure and write well constructed sentences.