**Grammar Lesson 15: Parallelism**

Similarity of structure in a pair or [series](http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/series09term.htm) of related words, phrases, or clauses. Also called [**parallel structure**](http://grammar.about.com/od/pq/g/parallelstructureterm.htm).

By convention, items in a series appear in parallel grammatical form: a [noun](http://grammar.about.com/od/mo/g/nounterm.htm) is listed with other nouns, an [*-ing* form](http://grammar.about.com/od/il/g/ingformterm.htm) with other *-ing* forms, and so on. Failure to express such items in similar grammatical form is called [**faulty parallelism**](http://grammar.about.com/od/fh/g/Faulty-Parallelism.htm). Richard Norquist, <http://grammar.about.com/od/pq/g/parallelismterm.htm>

For each example what parts of speech are used in a parallel fashion

* O well for the fisherman's boy,  
  That he shouts with his sister at play!  
  O well for the sailor lad,  
  That he sings in his boat on the bay!"  
  (Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Break, Break, Break," 1842)

Parts of speech:

* "Today's students can put dope in their veins or hope in their brains. If they can conceive it and believe it, they can achieve it. They must know it is not their aptitude but their attitude that will determine their altitude."  
  (Jesse Jackson)

Parts of Speech:

* "They are laughing at me, not with me."  
  (Bart Simpson, *The Simpsons*)

Parts of Speech:

* "Voltaire could both lick boots and put the boot in. He was at once opportunist and courageous, cunning and sincere. He managed, with disconcerting ease, to reconcile love of freedom with love of hours.  
  (Dominique Edde)

Parts of Speech:

* "Truth is not a diet but a condiment."  
  (Christopher Morley)

Put it together

1. Read the following two passages. What parallel structures do they incorporate? How does their use of parallelism contribute to the persuasive arguments they are putting forth?

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Thomas Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence*, 1776.

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today. Martin Luther King, *I Have A Dream*, 1963.

1. Writing descriptions. Include in one sentence.

Describe a sibling use parallel structure of three different adjectives.

Describe a day at school using gerund forms of be, hurt, consider, and break

Describe a test for which you are unprepared using the infinitives exaggerate, procrastinate, disappoint, and fabricate

Describe a lunchroom disagreement which involves parallel prepositional phrases across, around, during, behind, and after