PARALLELISM

What is parallelism?

When you write a sentence that uses the same form for more than one word, phrase, or clause, the sentence has a parallel structure.

How do writers use parallel structures in their writing?

Parallelism can often make sentences easier to understand, because it signals to the reader that the things or ideas in the sentence are separate but relate and are equally important. Parallelism is useful when you need to group things or ideas together in such a way that the reader will see how they relate to each other. This could be when you are listing or categorizing items, explaining an ordered process, emphasizing a pattern, or contrasting ideas or actions.

What are some examples of parallelism?

**Parallel Words**

Ex. Park rules prohibit cigarettes, alcohol, and campfires.

In this example, the prohibited items are parallel because they agree in number and we can now clearly understand what items are prohibited at the park.

**Parallel Phrases**

Ex. This food processor can dice vegetables, puree fruit, and blend liquids.

In this example, the items in the series are parallel because we can understand that the food processor performs these three actions. Each verb (dice, puree, blend) takes on the same form.

**Parallel Clauses**

Ex. As a sales associate, I corresponded with current customers, and I provided product demonstrations for potential customers.

In this example, both independent clauses are parallel because they adhere to the same past tense verb forms in order to convey actions the subject performed in a past job.

How can writers edit for parallelism?

When editing your writing, look for places where you have lists of words or two or more phrases to see if they follow a similar structure. Carefully using parallel structures will allow you to achieve an extra level of clarity in your writing and will lend to the style of your writing as well.