

UNCG



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WRITING CENTER  
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## PARALLELISM

### THE PRINCIPLE

Using parallel structures (matching parts of speech) in a pair or series of related words, phrases, or clauses helps to make sentences clear, coherent, concise, and emphatic.

The sentence you just read contains three examples of parallel or matching elements:

*pair or series* -- a pair of nouns

*words, phrases, or clauses* -- a series of nouns

*clear, coherent, concise, and emphatic* -- a series of adjectives

### THE PROBLEM

Notice how awkward the opening sentence would sound if we disrupted those parallel structures. In this version, the underlined phrases are NOT parallel:

Using parallel (grammatically matching) structures in a pair or when there's a series of related words, phrases, or in writing clauses helps to make sentences clear, they are easier to follow, concise, and better emphasis.

Abraham Lincoln's parallel phrase, "a government *of the people, by the people, for the people,*" would not have been nearly so memorable if he had said "a government *of the people, one that the people run, and it is for them*"!

Here are some sentences that sound awkward because they should have parallel constructions, but they don't. The mismatched elements are underlined so they are easier to see.

"It's all Adam's fault," Eve exclaimed. "He was talking, sleeping and picked flowers while I was busy at the tree."

Adam wanted Eve not only to obey while he was around but also when he was away.

It was easier to believe Adam was at fault than seeing him hide behind a fig leaf.