

A Quick Reference Guide from Writing Support Services

<http://www.cuw.edu/Tools/resources/lrc/writingcenter/grammar.html>

Parallelism

What is Parallelism?

- **Expressing parallel thoughts in parallel structures**

Why is it important?

- To aide in understanding sentences, provide rhythm and enhance clarity

When should it be used?

- Balance like with like (Gerunds with gerunds, sentences with sentences, etc.):

Wrong: I prefer to play, think, to be able to say, drinking whatever suits me.

Right: I prefer to play, to think, to say, to drink whatever suites me.

Wrong: I hoped that the ball would fly, that the catcher would catch it and that he'd strike the runner out.

Right: I hoped that the ball would fly, that the catcher would catch, and that the runner would strike out.

Use introductory words to clarify meaning:

Wrong: I don't know what my teachers want, friends expect or I must do.

Right: I don't know what my teachers want, what my friends expect or what I must do.

- **Be sure that items in a series have parallel structure:**

Wrong: The children loved to climb mountains, hiding in the forest, gathering wild mushrooms, and time with the fairies.

Right: The children loved climbing mountains, hiding in the forest, gathering in wild mushrooms, and spending time with the fairies.

Wrong: Whether he knows or she might, I still don't know.

Right: Whether he knows or she knows, I still don't know.

How can we check to see if we're using it correctly?

- Examine the paragraph for “or” and “and”. Check both sides to ensure that the structures on each side match.
- Read the sentence aloud; as you listen to the objects compared, look for rhythm or repetition of a sound.
- Put the objects into a column. The sentence should remain grammatically sound, regardless of which article comes first. For example: