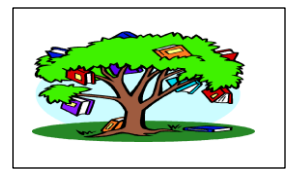


Toward Better Literacy: Reference Outlines



Parallel Structure

Parallel structure is the repetition of the same form or structure within a sentence or paragraph. This makes items in a series easier to take together but can blur the distinctions.

Comparing Items:

One can see the relationship between items if presented in a parallel fashion.

What will we hold to: established moral principles or progressive personal sympathies?

Items in a Series:

Coordinating conjunctions (and, or, etc.) combine words and phrases of the same grammatical category, or part of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, infinitives, and participles)

Helen likes to study, read, and help others.
(not Helen likes to study, reading, and be helpful.)

As exemplified above, save longer items for the last in the series.

Nesting One Series Within Another:

Within a given series, one or more of the items can be a series. Semicolons can be used in place of commas to distinguish between this larger list and any smaller lists nested in its items.

Our specials are French toast; ham and eggs; and oatmeal with fruit, nuts, and brown sugar.

Arrange the list from the simplest to the most complex. This will make things easier on the reader.

Beyond the Sentence Level:

Paragraphs can be parallel to each other. Each body paragraph might begin with a **topic sentence**, follow up with **supporting examples**, and finish with a **transition** to the next topic. This gives the essay a more consistent, logical feel.

Parallelism can also be observed in textbook chapters and scholarly articles. In any context, it adds **clarity**, **coherence**, and **predictability**. The only weakness is that parallelism can blur definitions of terms strung together.