Using Parallel Structure

**Parallelism**, or **parallel structure**, is an effective way to add both smoothness and directness to your writing. **Parallelism means balance** of two or more similar words, phrases, or clauses.

Maria likes dancing, swimming, and **to jog**.

Notice that the first two parts **balance** because they both end in “ing.” To achieve parallelism, make the following changes to the sentence:

Maria likes **dancing**, swimming, and jogging.

**OR**

Maria likes **to dance**, to swim, and to jog.

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**Note the differences:**

**Not Parallel:** The cable runs across the roof; the north wall is where it runs down.

**Parallel:** The cable runs across the roof and down the north wall.

**Not Parallel:** Jack admires friends with strong convictions and who think for themselves.

**Parallel:** Jack admires friends who have strong convictions and who think for themselves.

**OR**

Jack admires friends with strong convictions and with independent ideas.

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**Exercise:** In each sentence, circle the part that is unbalanced. Rewrite this part so that it matches the rest of the sentence.

- Cinema Ten’s popcorn is greasy, stale, and has too much salt.

- When I first come home, my dog Muffin barks, is running to get his ball, and crops it at my feet.

- The Aguilar family spent a relaxing afternoon enjoying the view of the ocean, eating lunch at Fisherman’s Pier restaurant, and window-shopped in the village square.

- Margaret is a woman of great talent, kindness, and is compassionate.