

Parallelism

(This material was taken from the Writing Center at Texas A&M)

Parallelism refers to keeping like elements in the same grammatical form; for example: singing, eating, dancing; or, to sing, to eat, to dance. It is a type of stylistic repetition employed by writers for rhythm and impact. A lack of parallel structure can also be confusing, especially in regard to lists.

Bad example: Alexander Hamilton influenced the creation of the United States through his *authorship* of the Federalist Papers, *established* the National Bank, and *participating* in the writing of the Constitution.

The problem with this list is that each item is in a different grammatical form: the first item is a noun, the second item is a past tense verb, and the third is a gerund. But let us make the items parallel:

Good Example 1: Alexander Hamilton influenced the creation of the United States through his *authorship* of the Federalist Papers, his *establishment* of a National Bank, and his *help* in developing the Constitution.

Good Example 2: Alexander Hamilton influenced the creation of the United States because he *authored* the Federalist Papers, *established* the National Bank, and *helped* to develop the Constitution.

Good Example 3: Alexander Hamilton influenced the creation of the United States by *authoring* the Federalist Papers, *establishing* the National Bank, and *helping* to develop the Constitution.

Example one uses *nouns* to establish parallelism, example two uses *verbs*, and example three uses *gerunds*. Each one is correct and could be used as a sentence.

Parallelism can also be simple (from *Simon and Shuster Handbook*, 2009, p. 237):

Bad Example: Love and being married go together.

Good Example: Love and marriage go together.