Name:\_\_\_\_\_

### What needs improvement in the following sentences?

- Taylor thought the movie was boring, silly, and was too long.
- Sandy found the dog food to have an odd color, an unpleasant smell, and it tasted bad.
- Sandy barked at a cat, Sandy barked at the moon. Sandy barked at a rustling trash bag.

Sentences are smoother and easier to read when ideas that are compared or contrasted are expressed in similar grammatical patterns without unnecessary repetition. Taking out repetitive words and combining similar sentences and ideas is called **parallel structure**, **parallel construction**, and **parallelism**. So the 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence listed above, would be more effective if it were written:

• Sandy barked at a cat, the moon, and a rustling trash bag.

The Notice that the commas are placed after each item in the list except the last one.

When using parallel structure, the main rule to remember is that the things in the list must be the same grammatical form. This is best summed up in the following:

The items in the list must be <u>all nouns</u>, <u>all verbs</u>, <u>all adjectives</u>, <u>all adverbs</u>, <u>all infinitives (to--)</u>, <u>all prepositional phrases</u>, <u>all</u> <u>gerunds (-ing words)</u>, or <u>all clauses</u>.

So what triggers a need for parallelism?

When using the conjunctions **and**, **but**, **or**, **nor**, make sure they connect the <u>same parts of</u> <u>speech</u> or phrases or clauses with the <u>same grammatical structure</u>.

- $\otimes$  I like to run, to swim, and reading.
- © I like to run, to swim, and to read.
- © I like running, to swimming, and reading.

Likewise, use parallelism when making comparisons using "than" or "as."

- $\ensuremath{\mathfrak{S}}$  Smiling takes fewer muscles than to frown.
- © Smiling takes fewer muscles than frowning.

Also use parallel structure when combining ideas with the following word pairs: not only...but also, from....to...., on the one hand....on the other hand, both...and..., neither....nor, either....or, rather...than...

- Sandy changed from an undisciplined, wild dog to being obedient and faithful
- © Sandy changed from an undisciplined, wild dog to an obedient, faithful companion.

Parallelism is so called because you should be able to line up the parallel components in a symmetrical fashion. Each item in the series should fit the stem and be in the same grammatical structure as the others. There should be no unbalanced repetition.



Steps to follow to make sure you don't fall into the pit of faulty parallelism:

<u>Step One:</u> Make each item connected with a conjunction fit the stem smoothly without repetition.

• An oldest child is hard working, pressured, and is bossy.

An oldest child is pressured is bossy.

**<u>Step Two:</u>** Put each item in the same grammatical form – adjectives with adjectives, prepositional phrases with prepositional phrases, and infinitives with infinitives, etc.

## **IDENTIFY WHAT DOESN"T FIT HERE:**

• Oldest children are determined, bossy, and perfectionists.

Oldest children are determined bossy perfectionists

• Sophie is a girl with executive ability and who should be elected class president.

with executive ability

Sophie is a girl

who should be elected class president

### Sometimes there are several different ways to fix:

- ③ Oldest children are determined, bossy, and fussy.
- © Oldest children are determined and bossy perfectionists.
- © Sophie is a girl with executive ability and leadership potential
- © Sophie, a girl with executive ability, should be elected class president.

### **\$** Sometimes parallelism is just a problem with extra words or missing words.

o This summer, I plan to tour Athens, Rome, and see the sights of Paris.

New, improved, parallel version:

# Sometimes parallelism is a problem with an incorrect preposition (it's correct for one item, but not for another)

• Sandy's success as a parent is because of his care and interest in his children.

New, improved, parallel version:

**Practice**—Identify and fix faulty parallelism. Make sure that the items in the series are in the same grammatical form, that any preposition used fits all items in the series, and that there is no unbalanced repetition.

- 1. I love to run, to swim, and punctuating sentences.
- 2. Tyler is friendly, a smart person, and can play sports really well.
- 3. Odysseus is famous for his courage, his cunning, and never giving up.
- 4. Required summer reading helps students maintain reading skills and how to stay organized.
- 5. There are trains leaving the station in the morning and noon.
- 6. The cancer researcher is interested and excited about the new advances in medical technology.

## Which passes the parallelism test?

A. Required summer reading can benefit the entire school district by boosting school rankings, increasing community pride, and it also results in higher property values.

B. Required summer reading can benefit the entire school district by boosting school rankings, increasing community pride, and by raising higher property values.

C. neither A nor B

D. both A and B