Parallel Structure

Class Notes

***Parallel Structure Is...***

Within Sentences:

* Lists need the elements to be expressed in the same way, as the same part of speech, and if those elements are verbs, in the same tense: “I enjoy scuba-diving, fencing, and bowling,” *not* “I enjoy scuba-dive, fencing, and to bowl.”
* Modifiers are either adjectives or adverbs. Do not modify the same word with both adjectives and adverbs; keep like with like, as with the adjectives in this sentence: “Her work is *intricate* and yet *accessible*.”
* Verbs put parallel with each other need to be in the same tense (conjugation)— and to be parallel with other verbs, not other parts of speech: “I want *to work* and *to be appreciated* for my work,” not “I want to work, and appreciation.”

Between Sentences

* Paragraphs should be monitored to make sure they follow a single train of thought from sentence to sentence. Related points should be addressed in similar ways.
* Whole essays should follow a single thesis, and not get sidetracked. If an essay goes off-topic, the writer (you!) should either change or delete the extra information, or else consider revising the topic.

***Problems with Parallel Structure Can Be Fixed by...***

* Rewrite “coordinated parts” (parts that go together) to match (look for the joining conjunctions—either coordinating conjunctions, as in the “FANBOYS,” or correlative conjunctions, as in “either... or...” or “not only... but also...”):
* “The question at hand is whether to incorporate student feedback or complete reliance on the opinions of professionals.”
* Either phrase can be changed to match the other. The first half might be rewritten as “The choice at hand is between incorporation of student feedback...” or the second half could be changed to “to rely completely on the opinions of professionals.”
* If parallel and equal things are “held together” by correlative conjunctions, as in any of the list that follows, move the conjunctions so they contain those equal things:
* If neither of these work for the effect you want, split the sentence up.