

Effective Rhetoric, Effective Writing: Parallelism in Technical Communication

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Introduction

- What is rhetoric?
- What is parallelism?
- Why practice parallel writing?
- Why create parallel documentation?

I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors.

Inauguration Speech of the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama, January 20, 2009

What is rhetoric?

- ✓ The art of speaking or writing effectively
- ✓ The study of the technique and rules for using language effectively
- ✓ Skill in the effective use of language to persuade or entertain

- ✗ Excessive use of ornamentation in language
- ✗ Pompous and confusing style of speech and writing
- ✗ Insincere and empty talk

Noun

S: (n) **rhetoric** (using language effectively to please or persuade)

S: (n) **grandiosity**, **magniloquence**, **ornateness**, **grandiloquence**, **rhetoric** (high-flown style; excessive use of verbal ornamentation) "*the grandiosity of his prose*"; "*an excessive ornateness of language*"

S: (n) **palaver**, **hot air**, **empty words**, **empty talk**, **rhetoric** (loud and confused and empty talk) "*mere rhetoric*"

S: (n) **rhetoric** (study of the technique and rules for using language effectively (especially in public speaking))

WordNet® (WordNet Search - 3.0), Princeton University, <http://wordnet.princeton.edu/>

Main Entry: **rhet·o·ric**

Pronunciation: \ˈre-tə-rik\

Function: *noun*

Etymology: Middle English *rethorik*, from Anglo-French *rethorique*, from Latin *rhetorica*, from Greek *rhētorikē*, literally, art of oratory, from feminine of *rhētorikos* of an orator, from *rhētōr* orator, rhetorician, from *eirein* to say, speak — more at [word](#)

Date: 14th century

1 : the art of speaking or writing effectively: as **a** : the study of principles and rules of composition formulated by critics of ancient times **b** : the study of writing or speaking as a means of communication or persuasion

2 a : skill in the effective use of speech **b** : a type or mode of language or speech; *also* : insincere or grandiloquent language

3 : verbal communication : [discourse](#)

Merriam-Webster, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rhetoric>

What is classical rhetoric?

- **When**
 - Dates back to ancient Greece (600 BC)
- **What**
 - Art of argumentation and persuasion
 - Teaching and knowledge
 - Public speaking (spoken language)
- **Who**
 - The Sophists: counterarguments
 - Plato: “false rhetoric” vs. “true rhetoric”
 - Aristotle: “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion”.

What is modern rhetoric?

- **When**
 - Turn of the 20th century
- **What**
 - Style of language applied using rhetorical devices
 - Study and theory (spoken and written language)
 - Communication, law, literature, linguistics, media studies, philosophy, politics
- **Who**
 - Scholars and academics
 - Modern professionals in:
advertising, journalism, lobbying, law, marketing,
mass media, politics, public relations,
technical communication

Rhetorical devices

Alliteration	Antithesis	Climax	Epizeuxis	Metanoia	Polysyndeton
Allusion	Apophesis	Conduplicatio	Eponym	Metaphor	Procatalepsis
Amplification	Aporia	Diacope	Exemplum	Metonymy	Rhetorical Question
Anacoluthon	Aposiopesis	Dirimens Copulatio	Expletive	Onomatopoeia	Scesis Onomaton
Anadiplosis	Apostrophe	Distinctio	Hyperbaton	Oxymoron	Sententia
Analogy	Appositive	Enthymeme	Hyperbole	<u>Parallelism</u>	Simile
Anaphora	Assonance	Enumeratio	Hypophora	Parataxis	Symploce
Antanagoge	Asyndeton	Epanalepsis	Hypotaxis	Parenthesis	Synecdoche
Antimetabole	Catachresis	Epistrophe	Litotes	Personification	Understatement
Antiphrasis	Chiasmus	Epithet	Metabasis	Pleonasm	Zeugma

Source: Robert A. Harris Ph.D., VirtualSalt, "A Handbook of Rhetorical Devices", <http://www.virtualsalt.com/rhetoric.htm>

What is parallelism?

“Parallelism is recurrent syntactical similarity. Several parts of a sentence or several sentences are expressed similarly to show that the ideas in the parts or sentences are equal in importance. Parallelism also adds balance and rhythm and, most importantly, clarity to the sentence.”

Parallelism in modern rhetoric

- I stand here today
 1. humbled by the task before us
 2. grateful for the trust you have bestowed
 3. mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors

- I stand here today
 1. adverb + preposition + article + noun + ...
 2. adverb + preposition + article + noun + ...
 3. adverb + preposition + article + noun + ...

adverb + preposition + article + noun

adverb + preposition + article + noun

adverb + preposition + article + noun

Balancing sentences

Information is knowledge obtained from investigation, by studying, or has been instructed.

Information is knowledge obtained from investigation, study, or instruction.

Information is knowledge obtained from investigation, by studying, or has been instructed.

- Information is knowledge
 1. obtained from investigation
 2. obtained by studying
 3. [that] has been instructed
- Information is knowledge
 1. verb + preposition + noun
 2. verb + preposition + verb
 3. [determiner] + verb + verb + verb

Unbalanced (no visible pattern)

verb + preposition + noun

verb + preposition + verb

determiner + verb + verb + verb

Information is knowledge obtained from investigation, study, or instruction.

Example

- Information is knowledge obtained from
 1. investigation
 2. study
 3. Instruction
- Information is knowledge obtained from
 1. noun
 2. noun
 3. noun

Balanced (visible pattern)

noun

noun

noun

Why practise parallel writing?

- Text easier to read
- Information easier to identify
- Documentation symmetrical and structured

Making text easier to read

ContentMaker is a tool used for managing XML-based content created by technical authors who need to process text and perform final publishing tasks.

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- ContentMaker
 - tool
 - used for managing XML-based content
 - content created by technical authors
 - process text
 - perform final publishing tasks

ContentMaker is an XML-based authoring tool used to create, manage, and publish content.

- ContentMaker is an XML-based authoring tool used to
 1. create [content]
 2. manage [content]
 3. publish [content]
- ContentMaker is an XML-based authoring tool used to
 1. verb
 2. verb
 3. verb

Shorter and easier to read

verb

verb

verb

Making information easier to identify

Printer Sharing

1. Click the **Start** button, then you point to **Settings**, and click **Printers**. The printer you want to share should be selected in the **Printers** window.
2. To share, on the **File** menu, click **Sharing**.

To share your printer

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1. imperative + simple present + imperative
2. simple present (modal) + conditional passive
3. infinitive + imperative

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1. imperative + imperative + imperative
2. imperative + simple present (modal)
3. imperative

Making lists parallel (1)

There are several ways to open documents in Windows:

- You can open your document from within the program you used to create it.
- Use the **Documents** command on the **Start** menu.
- The **Find** command on the **Start** menu locates the document and you can then open it.
- Double-clicking a document icon in **My Computer** opens a document.

Making lists parallel (2)

There is more than one way to open documents in Windows. You can:

- **Open** your document from within the program you used to create it.
- **Use** the **Documents** command on the **Start** menu.
- **Use** the **Find** command on the **Start** menu to locate the document and then open it.
- **Double-click** a document icon in **My Computer**.

Making similar items parallel

Save current display

You can specify a file name to save the current list of results to.

Print current display

Displays a popup dialog in which to specify a print command to which the current results can be routed.

Clear current display

Clears the **Search for...** and **Filters** field, and results window.

Making documentation symmetrical and structured

📁 About ContentMaker	➔ About ContentMaker
📁 Getting started	➔ Getting started
📁 ContentMaker modules	➔ ContentMaker modules
Content modules	➔ noun (plural)
Image modules	➔ noun (plural)
Configuration module	➔ noun (singular)
📁 Working with modules	➔ verb-ing + noun
Module workspace	➔ noun
Project workspace	➔ noun
📁 Setting up projects	➔ verb-ing + noun
📁 Creating content	➔ verb-ing + noun
📁 Managing content	➔ verb-ing + noun
📁 Publishing content	➔ verb-ing + noun
📁 ...	

Creating Content

To write your document in ContentMaker you will need to assemble existing modules and create new modules. Start by setting up a project and defining your document's structure. First create a content module of category Book, which will act as a container for all other objects that make up the document.

You Managing Content

Working with ContentMaker has the following advantages:

- The process chain can be visualized and managed through assigned roles and permissions throughout the lifecycle.
- The status of all documentation can easily be found and identified according to internal versions.
- Publishing Content

This section describes how to finish and publish your content modules for print and for Web and Help outputs. ContentMaker can produce PDF, HTML, XML, WebHelp, and JavaHelp.

To publish for print

1. In the Module workspace, right-click a book and choose...

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You create content in ContentMaker by assembling existing modules and creating new modules. You start by setting up a project and defining your document's structure. You create a content module of category Book, which will act as a container for all other objects that make up the document. You can then

Managing Content

You can manage the entire content lifecycle in ContentMaker by monitoring the status of the content. You can easily identify the status of all content modules by using the internal version management functions.

You assign roles and permissions

Publishing Content

You can publish content created in ContentMaker for review or for final distribution. You can output content for printed publication in PDF format or for electronic distribution as HTML or XML file, WebHelp, and JavaHelp.

...

...

Creating Content

You create content in ContentMaker by assembling existing modules and creating new modules. You start by setting up a project and defining your document's structure. You create a content module of category Book, which will act as a container for all other objects that make up the document. You can then insert

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...

...

Why create parallel documentation?

- Information design
 - ➔ Design supports text function
- Content reuse
 - ➔ Text must also be suitable for use in non-linear documentation
- Translation
 - ➔ Human and machine translation benefit from compliance with standards and conventions

Information design

Creating Content

Topic heading: Tahoma, 20 pt
verb +ing for procedures intro

You create content in ContentMaker by assembling existing modules and creating new modules. You start by setting up a project and defining your document's structure. You create a content module of category Book, which will act as a container for all other objects that make up the document. You can then insert existing the Book module.

Paragraph: Tahoma, 18 pt
"you", direct speech

To create a content module

- 1. In the Module workspace, ...
- 2. ...

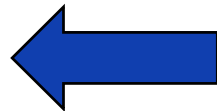
Procedure heading:
Tahoma, 18 pt,
dark gray, shaded
To + infinitive +
steps in imperative

To insert a content module

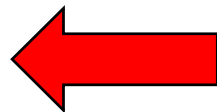
- 1. In the Module workspace, ...
- 2. ...

Content reuse

- 📁 About ContentMaker
- 📁 Getting started
- 📁 ContentMaker modules
 - Content modules
 - Image modules
 - Configuration module
- 📁 Working with modules
 - Module workspace
 - Project workspace
- 📁 Setting up projects
- 📁 Creating content
- 📁 Managing content
- 📁 Publishing content
- 📁 ...



- 📁 **Importing content**
 - Importing from a file
 - Importing from a project
 - Importing in batch



- 📁 **How to export content**
 - To export as a file
 - Export projects
 - Batch export

Translation



- ☐ Creating content
- ☐ Managing content
- ☐ Publishing content



- ☐ Inhalte anlegen
- ☐ Inhalte verwalten
- ☐ Inhalte publizieren

- ☐ verb+ing + noun
- ☐ verb+ing + noun
- ☐ verb+ing + noun



- ☐ noun + verb (infinitive)
- ☐ noun + verb (infinitive)
- ☐ noun + verb (infinitive)

Main uses of parallel writing in Technical Communication

- Group, structure, and balance information
- Improve readability through structure, repetition, and rhythm
- Make information easier to identify
- Emphasize meaning and likeness
- Complement documentation design
- Promote content reuse and leveraging
- Lead to more accurate, consistent, and faster translation
- Make listeners or readers receptive to information

Resources and further reading

- Gideon O. Burton, Brigham Young University, “Silva Rhetoricae”,
<http://rhetoric.byu.edu/>
- Andrew R. Cline Ph.D., Missouri State University, “Rhetorica: A Rhetoric Primer”,
<http://rhetorica.net/textbook/>
- Robert A. Harris Ph.D., VirtualSalt, “A Handbook of Rhetorical Devices”,
<http://www.virtualsalt.com/rhetoric.htm>

Thank you for listening!

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