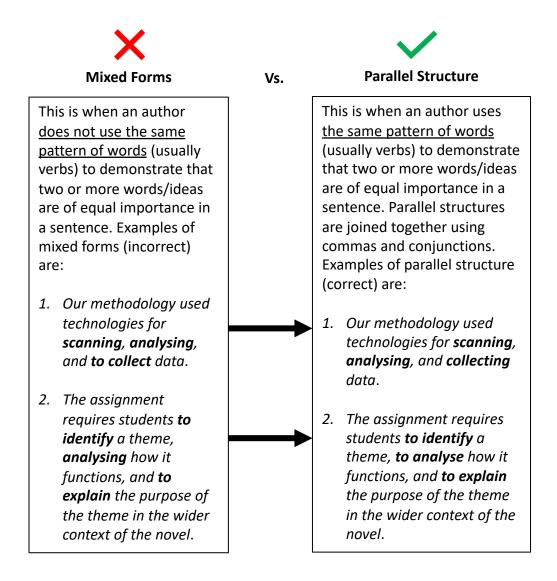
## **UCD Writing Centre**

Email: writing.centre@ucd.ie

## How do I achieve rhythm in my sentences?

1. Avoid mixed forms by using parallel structure.



**NOTE**: A verb is a word that describes the action, state, or occurrence of the sentence, e.g. World War II <u>was</u> a military conflict from 1939 to 1945 that <u>engulfed</u> much of the globe; or, Statistics <u>give</u> a sample of data <u>to make</u> inferences about probability and variability.

By using parallel structure, there is better balance in and between each part of your sentence. You verb usage becomes consistent, and your reader can anticipate where the sentence is going. This helps to create "flow" in your writing.

UCD Writing Centre resources provide general writing advice only and students should always follow the specific rubric required by their School.

## **UCD Writing Centre**

Email: writing.centre@ucd.ie

## How do I achieve rhythm in my sentences?

2. Vary your sentence length.

- Too many consecutive short sentences (for example, sentences that are fewer than 8 words) can be frustrating to read.
- Too many consecutive **medium** sentences (for example, sentences that are around 8-12 words) can be dull to read.
- Too many consecutive long sentences (for example, sentences that are more than 12 words) can be exhausting to read.

Try to vary your sentence length by using a mixture of short, medium, and long sentences. This helps to create rhythm and "flow". Read the example below aloud, and listen to the rhythm of the sentences:

"This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five-word sentences are fine. But several together are monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety.

Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes, when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals – sounds that say, listen to this, it is important.

So write with a combination of short, medium, and long sentences. Create a sound that pleases the reader's ear. Don't just write words. Write music."

- Provost, Gary. 100 Ways to Improve Your Writing. New York: Mentor, 1985. p.61.