

## How do I achieve rhythm in my sentences?

1. Avoid mixed forms by using parallel structure.



### Mixed Forms

This is when an author does not use the same pattern of words (usually verbs) to demonstrate that two or more words/ideas are of equal importance in a sentence. Examples of mixed forms (incorrect) are:

1. *Our methodology used technologies for **scanning, analysing,** and **to collect** data.*
2. *The assignment requires students **to identify** a theme, **analysing** how it functions, and **to explain** the purpose of the theme in the wider context of the novel.*

Vs.



### Parallel Structure

This is when an author uses the same pattern of words (usually verbs) to demonstrate that two or more words/ideas are of equal importance in a sentence. Parallel structures are joined together using commas and conjunctions. Examples of parallel structure (correct) are:

1. *Our methodology used technologies for **scanning, analysing,** and **collecting** data.*
2. *The assignment requires students **to identify** a theme, **to analyse** how it functions, and **to explain** the purpose of the theme in the wider context of the novel.*

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

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

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## 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.