Parallelism

Parallelism is the use of the same grammatical structure for items in a sentence that deserve equal emphasis.

Parallelism is an attractive and effective stylistic device.
Lack of parallelism is considered bad writing style.

Parallelism is especially effective in the following situations:

1. Items in a series
   Not parallel: The poems may be e-mailed, sent by postal mail, or the poet can drop them off at the editor’s office.
   Parallel: The poems may be e-mailed, sent by postal mail, or dropped off at the editor’s office.
   Not parallel: Ingmar Bergman’s films remain famous for their stark cinematography, epistemological angst, and the acting is intense.
   Parallel: Ingmar Bergman’s films remain famous for their stark cinematography, epistemological angst, and intense acting.

2. Items connected by and or or
   Not parallel: A docent tells visitors about the paintings and who painted them.
   Parallel: A docent tells visitors about the paintings and the painters.
   Parallel: A docent tells visitors about the paintings and the people who painted them.
   Not parallel: Working eighty hours a week can result in early retirement in Florida or you might be interred early in the grave.
   Parallel: Working eighty hours a week can result in early retirement in Florida or early interment in the grave.

3. Items compared by using than, more than, or rather . . . than
   Not parallel: Many Americans fear speaking in public more than the loss of a limb.
   Parallel: Many Americans fear speaking in public more than losing a limb.

4. Items inserted into parallel structures such as either . . . or or not only . . . but also
   Not parallel: Thomas Hardy mastered the writing of not only novels but he also wrote poems.
   Parallel: Thomas Hardy mastered the writing of not only novels but also poems.