**Syntax- What is it?**

Etymology: to arrange together (*syn* + *tassein* --which is also the root of "tactics")

Definition: the order or arrangement of words in a sentence

**Syntax and Balance**

**Parallelism**. "Similarity of structure in a pair or series of related words, phrases, or clauses" ([Corbett](https://mail.baylorschool.org/~jstover/toolbox/sources.html) 428). In other words, equivalent items (those joined by coordinate conjunctions) must be placed in comparable grammatical structures. Parallel items are joined by coordinate conjunctions (especially *and*, *or*, *nor*) and correlative conjunctions (*either / or*, *neither / nor*, *not only / but also* ).

* She went to the grocery store, post office, and gas station.
* Either you will turn in the essay on time, or you will suffer a significant penalty.
* "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this CONSTITUTION for the United States of America." --Constitution of the United States

**Faulty parallelism**. If parallelism is ignored, the grammar and coherence of the clause is ruined.

* She believed in democracy, she worked hard for the candidate of her choice, and was ecstatic when he was elected.
* Not only could Henry tune a normal piano but also repair player pianos.
* The cat and the large, complex amoeba went for a walk through the forest.

**Isocolon**. An isocolon exists when parallel structures have the same number of words and sometimes even of syllables.

* "His purpose was to impress the ignorant, to perplex the dubious, and to confound the scrupulous" (Corbett 429).
* ". . . but what else can one do when he is alone in a jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?" --Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
* A good student questions his teachers, studies his books, and learns his lessons.

**Climax**. A climax in structure exists when the arrangement of parallel words, phrases, or clauses is in an order of increasing importance.

* "Renounce my love, my life, myself--and you. --Alexander Pope, "Eloisa to Abelard"
* ". . . we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." --Declaration of Independence
* The industrialist made money, friends, and peace with himself.

**Antithesis**. "The juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, often in parallel structure" (Corbett 429). Conjunctions that express antithesis include *but*, *yet*, and *while*.

* I offered to help, but he refused my assistance.
* The prodigal robs his heir; the miser robs himself.
* ". . . ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." --John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address"
* " That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." --Neil Armstrong

Antithesis can occur when the wording contrasts, when the sense of the statement contrasts, or when both contrast.

* Contrasting wording: Let the rich give to the poor.
* Contrasting sense: I helped him gain a balance in this world, but he pushed me down in return.
* Contrasting wording and sense: "Those who have been left out, we will try to bring in. Those left behind, we will help to catch up." --Richard M. Nixon, "Inaugural Address"

**Syntax and Repetition**

**Anaphora**. "Repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginnings of successive clauses" (Corbett 437).

* "In every cry of every man, / In every Infant's cry of fear, / In every voice, in every ban, / The mind-forged manacles I hear." --William Blake, "London"
* "So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.
Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.
Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.
Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.
Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California."
--Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream"

**Antimetabole**. "Repetition of words, in successive clauses, in reverse grammatical order" (Corbett 442).

* "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man." --*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*

**Chiasmus**. "Reversal of grammatical structures in successive phrases or clauses " (but without the repetition of words) (Corbett 443).

* "By day the frolic, and the dance by night." --Samuel Johnson, "The Vanity of Human Wishes"

**Polyptoton**. "Repetition of words from the same root" of or the same word used as a different part of speech (Corbett 443).

* "Love is not love / Which alters when it alteration finds, / Or bends with the remover to remove" --William Shakespeare, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds"
* "Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." --Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address"

**Polysyndeton**. Repetition of conjunctions.

* "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day." --Genesis 1:1-5

**Syntax and Unusual Arrangements**

**Anastrophe** or **inversion**. The inversion of natural word order.

* "Once upon a midnight dreary . . ." --Edgar Allen Poe, "The Raven"
* "United, there is little we cannot do in a host of co-operative ventures. Divided, there is little we can do . . ." --John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address"

**Apposition**. Placing side by side two nouns, the second of which serves as an explanation of the first.

* The bear, a massive black object, frightened the small children.
* I ran from the woman, a wrinkled stranger.

**Asyndeton**. Omission of conjunctions between a series of related clauses.

* "I came, I saw, I conquered." --Julius Caesar
* The elephants charged, the horses scattered, the Big Top tent fell down.

**Ellipsis**. Deliberate omission of a word or words implied by context

* The man lost three teeth, the woman two.
* I read Shakespeare, you Agatha Christie.

**Parenthesis**. Insertion of some verbal unit in a position that interrupts the normal flow of the sentence.

* One day in class we got off the subject (as often happens with over-worked, sleep-deprived seniors) and began to discuss the literature of Dr. Seuss.
* Grades (which should be abolished) are detrimental to the health and sanity of students.

**Syntax and Sentence Variety**

**Grammatical types**. Sentences are divided into four grammatical types:

**Simple sentence**--one independent clause.

* The dog barks.

**Complex sentence**--one independent and one or more dependent clauses.

* After the dog barks, it goes to sleep.

**Compound sentence**--two or more independent clauses

* The dog barks, and then it goes to sleep.

**Compound-complex sentence**--two or more independent and one or more dependent clauses.

* After the dog barks, it goes to sleep, and then it wakes up.

**Loose and periodic sentences**. In [*The Elements of Style*](https://mail.baylorschool.org/~jstover/toolbox/sources.html), William Strunk and E. B. White counsel that we should avoid "a succession of loose sentences." "This rule refers especially to loose sentences of a particular type: those consisting of two clauses, the second introduced by a conjunction or relative" (25). Here is part of the example the authors employ to illustrate the point:

* "The third concert of the subscription series was given last evening, and a large audience was in attendance. Mr. Edward Appleton was the soloist, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra furnished the instrumental music" (25).

A periodic sentence, on the other hand, is one in which the most important matter arrives at the end. Strunk and White note, "The effectiveness of the periodic sentence arises from the prominence it gives to the main statement" (33). Here is one sentence they offer to exemplify the point:

* "With these hopes and in this belief I would urge you, laying aside all hindrance, thrusting away all private aims, to devote yourself unswervingly and unflinchingly to the vigorous and successful prosecution of this war" (33).

**Rhetorical question**. A question that conveys a point rather than expects an answer.

* "How many roads must a man walk down before you can call him a man?" --Bob Dylan
* "If we live in the nineteenth century, why should we not enjoy the advantages which the nineteenth century offers? Why should our life be in any respect provincial? If we will read newspapers, why not skip the gossip of Boston and take the best newspaper in the world at once?" --Henry David Thoreau, [*Walden*](https://mail.baylorschool.org/~jstover/toolbox/sources.html) (154-55)

**Inversion**

* Gone was the wind that had brought us here.
* Tired is he who faithfully does all his work.