Dictionary
Definition
adjective
noun
verb
adverb
Synonyms
Synonym Chooser
Example Sentences
Word History
Phrases Containing
Entries Near
Cite this Entry
Share
Kids Definition
More from M-W
Show Less
Save Word

parallel 1 of 4 adjective

par·al·lel ˈper-ə-ˌlel ˈpa-rə-, -ləl

Synonyms of *parallel* ›

1 a : extending in the same direction, everywhere equidistant (see EQUIDISTANT sense 1), and not meeting
parallel rows of trees

b : everywhere equally distant
concentric spheres are *parallel*

2 a : having parallel sides
a *parallel* reamer

b : being or relating to an electrical circuit having a number of conductors (see CONDUCTOR sense d(1)) in parallel (see PARALLEL entry 2 sense 4b)

c : arranged in parallel
a computer with four *parallel* processors

d : relating to or being a connection in a computer system in which the bits of a byte are transmitted over separate channels at the same time
a *parallel* port

→ compare SERIAL

3 a : similar, analogous, or interdependent in tendency or development : exhibiting parallelism in form, function, or development
... the standing committee systems in the two Houses are reasonably *parallel* ...
– Harold Zink
... *parallel* strikes on the railroads, in the gas and electricity services and in the metal and mining industries.
– Percy Winner

→ see also PARALLEL EVOLUTION

b : readily compared : **COMPANION**
the marriage rate turned upward ... the birth rate entered upon a *parallel* climb
– Oscar Handlin

c : having identical syntactical elements in corresponding positions

also : being such an element

d (1) : having the same tonic → used of major and minor keys and scales

(2) : keeping the same distance apart in musical pitch (see PITCH entry 4 sense 4b(1))

4 : performed while keeping one's skis parallel
parallel turns

parallel 2 of 4 noun

1 a : a parallel line, curve, or surface

b : one of the imaginary circles on the surface of the earth paralleling the equator and marking the latitude

also : the corresponding line on a globe or map

→ see latitude illustration

c : a character ‖ used in printing especially as a reference mark

2 a : something equal or similar in all essential particulars : **COUNTERPART**

b : **SIMILARITY, ANALOGUE**

3 : a comparison to show resemblance

4 a : the state of being physically parallel

b : an arrangement of electrical devices in a circuit in which the same potential difference is applied to two or more resistances with each resistance being on a different branch of the circuit

→ compare SERIES

c : an arrangement or state that permits several operations or tasks to be performed simultaneously rather than consecutively

parallel 3 of 4 verb

paralleled; paralleling; parallels

transitive verb

1 : to indicate analogy of : **COMPARE**

2 a : to show something equal to : **MATCH**

b : to correspond to

3 : to place so as to be parallel in direction with something

4 : to extend, run, or move in a direction parallel to

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P L A Y S
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parallel 4 of 4 adverb

: in a parallel manner

Phrases

in parallel
: in a parallel arrangement

Synonyms

Adjective

akin, alike, analogous, cognate, comparable, connate, correspondent, corresponding, ditto, like, matching, resemblant, resembling, similar, such, suchlike

Noun

common denominator, commonality, congruity, correspondence, resemblance, similarity, similitude

Verb

correspond (to), equal, match

See all Synonyms & Antonyms in Thesaurus ›

Choose the Right Synonym for *parallel*

SIMILAR, **ANALOGOUS**, **PARALLEL** mean closely resembling each other.

SIMILAR implies the possibility of being mistaken for each other.
all the houses in the development are *similar*

ANALOGOUS applies to things belonging in essentially different categories but nevertheless having many similarities.
analogous political systems

PARALLEL suggests a marked likeness in the development of two things.
the *parallel* careers of two movie stars

Examples of *parallel* in a Sentence

Adjective

the ***parallel*** careers of the two movie stars

These two sentences are ***parallel*** in structure.

Notice the ***parallel*** development of the two technologies.

See More

Recent Examples on the Web

Examples are automatically compiled from online sources to show current usage. Opinions expressed in the examples do not represent those of Merriam-Webster or its editors. Send us feedback.

Adjective

Residents also use the avenue to skip traffic on the ***parallel*** Marginal Tietê during the morning rush hour, when the crash likely occurred. Footage from the aftermath on Friday showed black clouds of smoke and bright orange flames unfurling over the highway.
– Ana Melgar, *CNN*, 7 Feb. 2025

Walter Salles reflects our ***parallel*** contradictions.
– Armond White, *National Review*, 7 Feb. 2025

Noun

But conversely, up north across the 49th ***parallel***, Trump's actions have created some solidarity at a time when Trudeau's Liberal Party has been on the rocks, and it's felt like only a matter of time before the Conservative Party, led by a quasi-Trumpian Pierre Polievre, would mount a victory.
– Talib Visram, *TIME*, 7 Feb. 2025

However, a deeper look reveals many ***parallels*** between the sport of football and the game of life.

– Contributed Content, *Twin Cities*, 7 Feb. 2025

Verb

In general, that ***parallels*** the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center's outlook for spring, with much of the U.S. expected to get average or above average temperatures and about half to get average precipitation from March to May.
– Mike Snider, *USA TODAY*, 31 Jan. 2025

Trump's actions on his first day in office show ***parallels*** with elements of the initiative.
– Hannah Parry, *Newsweek*, 22 Jan. 2025

Adverb

Pull up ***parallel*** to the lead vehicle until your rear bumpers align.
– Robert Klose, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11 July 2022

And while his career wouldn't quite live up to its early promise, if Saka's goes on to run ***parallel*** then few at the Emirates will be complaining.
– *Sl.com*, 23 Sep. 2019

See all Example Sentences for *parallel* ›

Word History

Etymology

Adjective, Noun, Verb, and Adverb
Latin *parallelus*, from Greek *parallēlos*, from *para* beside + *allēlōn* of one another, from *allos* ... *allos* one ... another, from *allos* other — more at ELSE

First Known Use

Adjective
circa 1550, in the meaning defined at sense 1a

Noun
1551, in the meaning defined at sense 1a

Verb
circa 1594, in the meaning defined at sense 1

Adverb
1646, in the meaning defined above

Time Traveler

The first known use of *parallel* was circa 1550

See more words from the same year

Phrases Containing *parallel*

in parallel	massively parallel	no parallel
parallel bars	parallel evolution	parallel park
parallel-veined	sub-parallel	uneven parallel bars
without parallel		

Dictionary Entries Near *parallel*

parallax
parallel
parallel axiom

See More Nearby Entries ›

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Kids Definition

parallel 1 of 4 adjective

par·al·lel ˈpar-ə-ˌlel

1 : lying or moving in the same direction but always the same distance apart
parallel lines
the train tracks are *parallel*

2 a : being or relating to an electrical circuit having a number of conductors in parallel

b : being or relating to a connection in a computer system in which the bits of a byte are transmitted over separate wires at the same time

3 : LIKE entry 3, SIMILAR
parallel situations

parallel 2 of 4 noun

1 : a parallel line, curve, or surface

2 a : one of the imaginary circles on the surface of the earth parallel to the equator that mark latitude

b : a corresponding line on a globe or map

3 a : COUNTERPART sense 1, EQUAL
a victory without *parallel*

b : SIMILARITY sense 1, LIKENESS

c : a tracing of similarity
draw a *parallel* between two periods of history

4 : an arrangement of electrical devices in a circuit in which the same potential difference is applied to two or more resistances with each resistance on a parallel branch

parallel 3 of 4 verb

1 : to be like or equal to

2 : to lie, run, or move in a direction parallel to
the highway *parallels* the river

parallel 4 of 4 adverb

: in a parallel manner → often used with *with* or *to*

More from Merriam-Webster on *parallel*

Nglish: Translation of *parallel* for Spanish Speakers

Last Updated: 10 Feb 2025 - Updated example sentences

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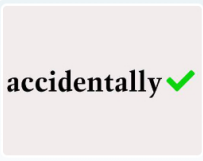

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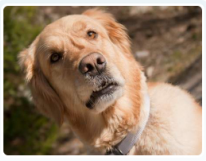

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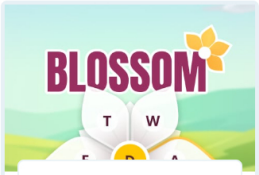

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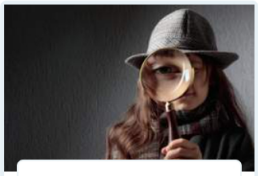

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