

Common Errors with verbs - Part 2

The subject of a sentence should have a verb. The following sentence, for example, is incorrect because the subject is left without a verb.

Incorrect: He, who has worked hard, let him win.

Correct: He, who has worked hard, must win.

Correct: Let him who has worked hard win.

A verb should agree with its subject, and not with the complement.

What is required is not palatial houses with modern amenities, but small cottages. (NOT What is required are...)

Sweet are the uses of adversity. (NOT Sweet is the uses of adversity.) Here the subject is the plural noun 'uses of adversity'.

Two auxiliaries can be used with one principal verb, when the form of the principal verb is appropriate to both auxiliaries.

I never have hurt anybody, and I never will. (= I never have hurt anybody, and I never will hurt anybody.)

No state can or will adopt this drastic measure.

Now consider the following sentence:

He never has, and never will commit such an offence.

The above sentence is wrong because the principal verb commit cannot be used with has which should be followed by a past participle (committed, in this case). It should, therefore, be rewritten as 'He never has committed, and never will commit such an offence.'

A participle should have a proper subject of reference.

Study the following sentence.

Having the bitten the postman, the farmer decided to shoot the dog.

The above sentence means that it was the farmer who bit the postman and not the dog!. It should, therefore, be written as follows:

The dog having bitten the postman, the farmer decided to shoot it.