

Mixed constructions

A sentence must have two parts – the subject and the predicate.

The subject is what the sentence is about and the predicate is what we are going to say about the subject.

If the sentence is to make complete sense, we have to put the two parts together in reasonable ways.

Problems with the adverb clause

When we write a sentence the subject normally goes at the beginning. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule.

Consider the following sentence.

Sweet are the uses of adversity.

Here the real subject 'the uses of adversity' goes at the end of the sentence which begins with an adjective. But as we have already said, this is an exception rather than the rule and we most often begin simple sentences with subjects.

A simple sentence has just one clause. A complex sentence, on the other hand, may have two or more clauses (one independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses).

A complex sentence can begin with a subordinate adverb clause.

But note that an adverb clause can't act as a noun; it can't be a subject. It can merely modify a verb, an adjective or another adverb in the main clause.

A prepositional phrase, too, cannot act as the subject of an independent clause. It can begin a sentence, but it can't act as the subject.

Study the examples given below.

Incorrect: In his attempt to win the election broke several rules about pre-poll publicity.

Correct: In his attempt to win the election, the candidate broke several rules about pre-poll publicity.

Correct: The candidate's attempt to win the election broke several rules about pre-poll publicity.

In the incorrect sentence given above, a prepositional phrase was used in the place of a subject.

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A clause needs just one subject, but sometimes we incorrectly write sentences which actually have two subjects in a situation that calls for just one.

Incorrect: The new automated answering machine we began to use it in the fall.

Correct: We began to use the new automated answering machine in the fall.