

Additional Note:

In summarising the plot of a play, book or film, the so-called historic present is generally used:

The main character is a German doctor, Rabik, who *emigrates* to France because of his political beliefs. Although he *is* a clever, skilled, and experienced surgeon, he *cannot* work as he used to....

The natural candidate for the title of ninth Duke d'Ascoigne, Louis Mazzini, *has been disinherited* by his family. Louis *suffers* the additional blow of the loss of his mother, who was his one friend and ally. Soon, however, he *evolves* a precise plan of revenge.

PART TWO

Coordination

Good English is generally very careful to express things which are parallel in thought in a way which is correspondingly parallel in form. This is especially important when enumerating lists of items:

The constitutional functions of HM the Queen include *opening* Parliament, *receiving* new ambassadors, *giving* her consent to new legislation, as well as *being* the supreme head of the Church of England.

This sentence, listing the Queen's constitutional functions, is clearly and consistently organised by means of a series of gerunds (*opening... receiving... giving... being...*). An equally possible alternative would have been a sentence like the following:

Among her various constitutional functions, HM the Queen is expected *to open* Parliament, *to receive* new ambassadors, *to give* her consent to new legislation....

or even a sentence like this one:

The constitutional functions of HM the Queen include *the opening of* Parliament, *the reception of* new ambassadors, *the granting of* her consent to new legislation....

One of the most common mistakes is to list items in a grammatically inconsistent manner, using different grammatical categories, as in the following sentence:

The Roundtable recognises three projects — *to cross* the Channel by bridge, *the tunnel* between Denmark and Sweden, and *developing* a new European high-speed rail network.

Here the three projects are not expressed in any coordinated way: the sentence needs to be rewritten in a consistent manner, either: "*to cross the Channel...*, *to build the tunnel...*, and *to develop...*", or: "*the*

bridge across the Channel, the tunnel..., and a new European high-speed rail network.

A related error of coordination involves the use of the pronoun *one*. It is important to be consistent when using the word, as in the following sentence:

One must not forget that *one* is, after all, but a temporary sojourner on this earth (*instead of*: "One must not forget that he...").

Suggested Exercises (10):

Rewrite the following in more coordinated (and where necessary, grammatically correct) English:

1. He is neither a member of Parliament nor of a political party.
2. The author's intention was not only to attack social hypocrisies but also an appeal for greater humanity.
3. This kind of understanding requires a great deal of effort — both from the teenagers and older sections of the community.
4. Languages are disparate not only in regard to grammar and vocabulary but also they differ phonetically.
5. Industrialisation does more harm than good to forests, animals, and indirectly to ourselves.
6. The police do not only not want to protect black people but sometimes even beat them up.
7. Australians almost worship their sports heroes irrespective of their worth as individual people and without distinguishing the importance of their achievements.
8. The vicar said that there was too much permissiveness in society anyway and therefore the young were in need of firm moral guidance.
9. We need a person who is not afraid of responsibility and making important decisions.
10. Not only are there no funds for classroom equipment, scientific laboratories and sports facilities, but even for basic needs of schools.
11. He talked about the famine, how more supplies were urgently needed, and that the situation was serious.
12. Besides, this project would not only become a major tourist attraction but a profitable business for the town as well.

13. We knew that everyone important, whether British or from America, would be at the meeting.

14. The book was written not only for the edification of young people but also to remind adults of their own duties.

15. Either they will go west for a few years or forever.

16. He not only presents the events but also his reactions to them.

17. Their religion teaches them to be kind, tolerant, love other people, nature and life.

18. The heroine becomes on the one hand the object of Wayne's love and devotion, and on the other of Benjamin's hatred.

19. They turn to theft, steal cars, break into shops or private houses, and finally they are sent to prison.

20. Before the War not only teachers were very rigid but also parents.

21. That has become an important date not only in the history of the USA but also of the whole world.

22. That would be good both for the children and teachers.

23. The reader does not only witness spectacular events but also takes part in the daily life of the main characters.

24. Many people merely show their respect for convention rather than they really believe in God.

25. So if we want our family life to change for the better, do your best and try first to change yourself, and then start to find the way to communicate with your parents.

26. The author planned to write something completely devoid of culture, taste, good manners, shocking and disgusting for a typical Parisian bourgeois.

Similarly one should avoid making the verb-form change unnecessary within the same sentence, as in the following:

These refugees *had known* degradation, for every conceivable injury *had been inflicted* on them.

This sentence is confusing because the subject of the first verb is not the subject of the second, even though the switch in subject seems to serve little purpose. Better would be a sentence like:

These refugees had known degradation, *having been subjected to every conceivable injury.*

Much the same can be said about the following sentence, where the switch in subject makes the sentence especially unclear:

Research *has been done* on this virus by scientists at our department, but *it still remains* an enigma.

Perhaps the worst thing about the sentence is that *it* can refer to *research*, *virus*, or *department*. A possible way of improving the text would be to write:

Scientists at our department *have been conducting* research into this virus, but so far *they have not met* with much success.

Suggested Exercises (11):

Rewrite the following sentences in more coordinated English:

1. The book was well received by critics, and they praised the scrupulous scholarship of the author.
2. They were arguing for days, but no agreement was reached.
3. It must be a person who is not afraid of responsibility, and at the same time any kind of criticism should not worry him or her.
4. Women in our country like the idea of equality of the sexes, and the picture of the "modern woman" is very tempting to them.
5. At that time Castro expressed warm friendship for the communist countries, and closer economic ties were established with them.
6. After its discovery Canada was first a French colony and then the British acquired it.
7. People in Europe not only adopted so-called American tastes but also some of their habits changed to what we might call the American life.

Left- and Right-Handed Sentences

Typical of many types of good English is the striving to create variety in sentence patterns, the avoidance of monotony. This can be illustrated by means of two alternative beginnings to a brief biographical entry for Marilyn Monroe:

- A.** Marilyn Monroe was born in Los Angeles on June 1, 1926. She was the illegitimate daughter of a depressive mother. Her early life was passed in various foster homes. She was selected as a model by an army photographer in 1944 and became a forces' pin-up overnight. She won a Twentieth Century Fox contract in 1946, but until the mid-50s her film appearances were restricted to minor roles. She was complex, driven, demanding, self-absorbed, and an early convert to the dubious pleasures of psychoanalysis. She ceaselessly revealed, reinvented and deconstructed herself at interviews and soon came to exercise a hypnotic fascination over a whole generation of Americans.
- B.** Born in Los Angeles on June 1, 1926, the illegitimate daughter of a depressive mother, Marilyn Monroe's early life was passed in various foster homes. Selected as a model by an army photographer in 1944 and becoming a forces' pin-up overnight, she won a Twentieth Century Fox contract in 1946, but until the mid-50s her film appearances were restricted to minor roles. Complex, driven, demanding, self-absorbed, and an early convert to the dubious pleasures of psychoanalysis, she ceaselessly revealed, reinvented and deconstructed herself at interviews, soon exercising a hypnotic fascination over a whole generation of Americans.

In **Passage A** every single sentence begins with the subject of the main verb, thereby creating an impression of monotony and failing to capture the attention of the reader.

In **Passage B**, by contrast, no sentence begins with the subject. In the first sentence the subject is preceded by a participial clause (*Born...*) and an appositional phrase (*the illegitimate daughter...*). In

the third sentence the subject is preceded by a series of adjectives (*Complex, driven, demanding...*) and a phrase (*an early convert...*) in apposition, while the main verb is actually followed by a participial clause as well (*soon exercising...*).

This variation in word-order is a crucial technique for avoiding sentence monotony, and its importance can hardly be overestimated. It is favoured by many writers of English — and especially by journalists, reviewers, biographers, and translators of literature. Here are a few more such sentences, which are sometimes referred to as 'left-handed':

1. A semi-secret network, the Broederbund considers itself responsible for maintaining the interests of the tribe. (*Instead of:* The Broederbund, which is a semi-secret network, considers itself responsible for....)
2. A lonely figure, he was compelled to react in the gloom of the 30s to the political situation. (*Instead of:* He was a lonely figure and he was compelled to react in the gloom....)
3. Fiercely clan-ridden and individualistic, that nation has always thwarted any encroachments on its collective independence. (*Instead of:* Since it is fiercely clan-ridden and individualistic, that nation....)

Suggested Exercises (12):

Rewrite the following sentences using similar syntactical patterns:

1. They are the first sectarian killings this year. They highlight the increased activity of the Protestants in recent months.
2. The new clerk was hard-working and reliable; within a short time he had made himself indispensable.
3. Gowen is a former Springbok captain; he has received many international awards for rugby.
4. He was a corpulent man with a short black moustache; he was wearing what appeared to be an old military uniform.
5. These groups were jealous of their traditional prerogatives and implacably hostile to any change. They were organised in a supreme council known as the Congress.
6. He was a solitary man; he was a retired chemist for a large mining company; he had no relations in South Africa.

7. Elizabeth Regina, who is more a monarch than a mother, continues to reign and shine.

8. He was a democrat of the Left and kept a tactical distance from the Communists.

9. She was petty and vindictive, and soon made a bad reputation for herself.

10. Panama, which was weaker and poorer, was defending itself fiercely.

11. I was hungry for knowledge. I was occasionally able to lay my hands on other publications.

12. They were cousins. They were both from failed marriages. They were polar opposites in temperament but equally fragile in character. They conspired in their own destruction.

13. Slovenia was once the scene of Turkish raids, peasant revolts, and religious persecution. It underwent rapid economic development in the nineteenth century.

14. Lumumba was a politician of vibrant energy and charismatic powers. He was also abrasive and unstable.

15. Oliver Scott was himself a Vietnam war-veteran. He spares us no details in portraying the full horrors of that conflict.

16. He was almost mad with fear; he tried to reason with his captors.

17. He was anxious to appear the peace-broker, and relished every possibility of mediating between the two sides.

18. He was an admirer of Hitler, and was constantly on the look-out for Nazi paraphernalia.

19. Yeltsin was an old hand in the Kremlin: he was used to such tactics.

20. Jagger was never one to turn down a free meal. He bore Driberg's company through long lunches at the Ritz.

21. The \$87 million structure is cozily small and acoustically excellent, though it will not be to every taste.

22. Mrs Castle has been traditionally at the left of the Labour Party; she has always been that party's conscience.

23. Andrew was frequently away on military duty. He began turning Fergie into a grass-widow.

24. He sat there impassively, ashen faced, and purse-lipped; he was an old man close to tears.

So far we have examined left-handed sentences which consist of nouns and/or adjectives in apposition to the subject. One special variety, however, exists which deserves attention. If we go back to Passage B of the Monroe-biography and study the first sentence, we

will see that the subject of that sentence is not *Monroe* but *Monroe's early life*; nonetheless, this subject is preceded by *Born* and the *illegitimate daughter*. These words refer, of course, not to *early life* but to *Monroe*, which here is in the possessive case, namely *Monroe's*. Here is another similar sentence:

4. A writer of the first magnitude, Singer's books have been translated into 64 languages. (*Instead of*: Singer was a writer of the first magnitude. His books have been translated into 64 languages.)

Some more conservative authorities of English would question this construction, but ultimately it is up to the individual writer whether he or she wishes to adopt it.

Suggested Exercises (13):

Rewrite these sentences using the same construction:

1. Belloc was a lover of France, Sussex and the sea. His best work lies in his histories where he presents a rich vision of Catholic Christendom.
2. She was a brilliant correspondent: her letters often bettered her more polished efforts in print.
3. It is one of the most disturbing films ever made, and its place is now guaranteed in Hollywood's Valhalla.

A more common form of left-handed sentence, however, involves the use of *participles* in apposition to the subject of the sentence, as in the second sentence of **Passage B** of the Monroe-biography (*Selected...*) and in the following examples:

5. Lacking a proper infrastructure, that country seems ill-equipped to face the twenty-first century. (*Instead of*: Since it lacks a proper infrastructure, that country...)
6. Written in the 1930s, the book aroused little interest for many years. (*Instead of*: The book was written in the 1930s. It aroused little interest for many years.)

In **Example 6** it is just about possible to start the sentence with *Having been written...*, but *Written...* is simpler, and therefore more elegant. Generally it is a good idea to avoid past participle passives of the type *Having been written* etc. Similarly, in **Passage B** of the

Monroe-biography, *Born...* and *Selected...* are preferable to *Having been born* and *Having been selected*.

Suggested Exercises (14):

Rewrite these sentences using a participial construction:

1. The sketch, which is drawn in heavy strokes, is a harsh reminder of everyday realities a century ago.
2. He was forced out of office three years later and devoted the rest of his life to the problems of North-South confrontation.
3. Comprehensive schools were introduced in the 1960s. They sought to guarantee a good education to all, irrespective of their academic abilities.
4. He was galvanised by Franco's invasion of Spain, and covered the war as a journalist.
5. She was abandoned by her mother at the age of four and mistook her father's mistress for her own until the age of eight; she grew up emotionally impoverished.
6. *The Observer* was founded in 1791. It is the world's oldest Sunday newspaper.
7. Wajda's film, which has been made in black and white, skilfully evokes the Warsaw of 1939.
8. She was endowed with an excellent memory and spoke several languages perfectly.
9. Mladych, who has been waging a campaign of slaughter and has been deaf to threats or pleas for mercy, has led his army to de facto victory.

If the sentence expresses a clear *causal* relationship, then it is generally possible to turn phrases like "he is", "she was" etc. into the participle *being*:

7. Being acutely aware of the weakness of his position, he avoided open confrontation. (*Instead of*: Since he was acutely aware of the weakness of his own position, he avoided open confrontation.)

Thus, in **Example 7**, where a causal relationship is expressed, the sentence begins with the participle *Being*. But it is also possible to leave the word out ("Acutely aware...").

In **Example 3**, similarly, there is a relation of cause and effect: the fact that "that nation" is "fiercely clan-ridden and individualistic" is