

SHIFTS IN POINT OF VIEW (PV)

MIXED CONSTRUCTIONS (MIX)

Point of view is said to be consistent when we continue the use of one subject, one person and number in pronouns and one tense, mood, or voice in verbs, as far as grammar allows. Needless deviations in any of these elements, forcing the reader to shift gears, will impair the effectiveness of your sentences.

Do Not Shift the Subject of a Sentence or the Voice of the Verb

Faulty: Frogs could be heard croaking as we neared the swamp. (The subject shifts from *frogs* to *we*. The verb shifts from passive to active voice.)

Revised: We heard frogs croaking as we neared the swamp.

Faulty: Ellen stayed at a mountain resort, and much of her time was spent in painting. (The subject shifts from *Ellen* to *much*. The verb shifts from active to passive voice.)

Revised: Ellen stayed at a mountain resort and spent much of her time in painting.

EXERCISE: Revise the following sentences by eliminating all needless shifts in subject or voice.

1. After we heard the lecture, questions were asked.

2. First the surface should be carefully cleaned; then put the glue on.

3. He marked the distance from the crosswalk to the curb, and then a heavy yellow line was painted across the area.

4. David was a fine archer, but his strength was not great enough to pull that heavy bow.

5. Mr. Jones put putty around all the window panes, and then the broken window sashes we were repaired.

6. After a path was dug through the snow by the children, they began coasting on their sleds.

7. The most plentiful supply of gold in the world is found in South Africa while Mexico leads in silver mining.

8. If you use highly fired china in your dishwasher, it will last longer.

9. After a hot fire was built by the campers, they dried their wet clothing.

10. A man needs more than intelligence to be a good legislator; you also have to be a student of human nature.

Revise the following sentences by eliminating all needless shifts in person or number.

Faulty: When *you* have good health, *one* should feel fortunate. (A shift from second to third person.)

Revised: When *you* have good health, *you* should feel fortunate.

Revised: When *one* has good health, *one* should feel fortunate.

Faulty: If a *person* practices diligently, *they* can become an expert archer. (A shift from singular to plural number.)

Revised: If a *person* practices diligently, *he* or *she* can become an expert archer.

EXERCISE: Revise the following sentences by eliminating all needless shifts in person or number.

1. No matter what political party one belongs to, you should listen to all the candidates.

2. You should install a safety belt in your car because they help to save lives.

3. A public opinion poll is based on a cross section of the population, but they have occasionally been wrong.

4. When one is feeling tired, a candy bar will give you some quick energy.

5. Leonard Bernstein once said of the New York Philharmonic that they were second to none.

6. Everyone should have access to birth control information, if their religious convictions permit.

7. The average black American today feels it is less important to imitate white people than for them to develop a feeling of racial pride in themselves.

8. Most people enjoy a novel by Tolstoy because their characters are so interesting.

9. If one is dissatisfied with the way the government is being run, you should write to your congressman more often.

10. I tried cigarette-smoking but they made my throat sore.

Do Not Shift Tense or Mood

Faulty: He *sat* down at his desk and *begins* to write. (The verb shifts from past tense to present tense.)

Revised: He *sat* down at his desk and *began* to write.

Faulty: *Hold* the rifle firmly against your shoulder, and then you *should take* careful aim. (The verb shifts from imperative mood to indicative mood.)

Revised: *Hold* the rifle firmly against your shoulder and then *take* careful aim.

EXERCISE: Revise the following sentences by eliminating all needless shifts in tense or mood.

1. When I smoked cigarettes, they don't do me any good.

2. First you should learn about the issues, and then vote for a candidate.

3. *Great Expectations* was exciting to read, but Miss Havesham is totally unrealistic.

4. You may prefer to travel by plane, but if the weather is bad, you might have to go by bus.

5. Since I explained to the professor why I hadn't done the work, I expect him to pass me.

6. The Sunday drivers were out in full force, and suddenly there is an accident.

7. I shall be delighted to attend if my husband might accompany me.

8. The university is attempting to revise its curriculum and the students were asked to submit suggestions.

9. The library has an intricate system of ordering books, but I might find what you wanted.

10. The store manager decided to offer free samples, and suddenly the store is packed with customers.

Do Not Use Mixed Constructions

A mixed construction is one in which a writer begins a sentence with one construction and then shifts to another.

The fact that John was a good student he received many offers of well-paying jobs.

As a college town many students have their own rooms here.

I think the use of DDT was by far the most dangerous in this county.

This error may occur when you are writing longer and more complex sentences than you commonly write. Careful proofreading of your papers is the best remedy, for once you are aware of the error, you can easily correct it.

Mixed: Take, for example, in the strip mines of southeastern Ohio, the blaster has one of the best-paying jobs.

Revised: For example, in the strip mines of southeastern Ohio, the blaster has one of the best-paying jobs.

Mixed: If we here in America cannot live peaceably and happily together, we cannot hope that nations that have different living conditions to live peaceably with us.

Revised: If we here in America cannot live peaceably and happily together, we cannot expect that other nations that have different living conditions will live peaceably with us.

Mixed: Every few hundred feet a test sample of the layer of earth a bit of it is analyzed to determine the distance from oil.

Revised: Every few hundred feet a test sample of the layer of earth is analyzed to determine the distance from oil.

A more specific kind of mixed construction springs from the use of an improper verb tense in indirect quotations.

Mixed: The manager told me he would have my car for me as soon as he can get the service garage.

Revised: The manager told me he would have my car for me as soon as he could get the service garage.

EXERCISE: Eliminate any mixed constructions in the following sentences.

1. As a center for the performing arts, most young actors and actresses yearn to go to New York.

2. I tried to explain the generation gap to my parents who, from their attitudes, one would think they hadn't read anything in years.

3. In every effort the student made to explain the problem to his instructor got him more confused.

4. By allowing black Americans to develop and enforce their unique culture will increase their sense of racial pride and identity.

5. Wage increases are regular but the way the cost of living is rising they don't make much difference.

6. By introducing sex education in the elementary school young people could approach marriage with understanding and maybe they would last longer.

7. LSD might be a useful drug, but the way it is used by young people it seems to do more harm than good.

8. Much help came from the instructor tried a second time to explain the idea to his students.

9. The law requires you to go to high school until of a certain age, besides being an accepted policy that all children go through at least high school.

10. By sitting down to talk together, many family problems could be avoided altogether.
