



The IWU Writing Center: MIXED CONSTRUCTIONS

A mixed construction means that a sentence begins with one grammatical pattern and ends with another. These incompatible sentence parts confuse readers.

- **"The fact that"** : This causes confusion when writers forget that this is actually a noun phrase acting as a subject or object.
 - **Example:** The fact that design elements are as important to a play's success as actors. ***Here the writer thought the subject was "design elements" when it was really "the fact that".*
Revision: The fact that design elements are as important to a play's success as actors is often overlooked by students.
Revision: Design elements are as important to a play's success as actors.
- **Adverbial clauses:** An adverb clause that begins with a subordinating conjunction (when, because, although) can't serve as a subject.
 - **Example:** When a set is successful design pleases actors and theatergoers alike. ***Successful is serving as an adjective modifying design instead of acting as the last word of the adverbial phrase.*
Revision: When a set is successful, the design pleases actors and theatergoers alike.
Revision: A successfully designed set pleases actors and theatergoers alike.
- **Prepositional phrases:** The object of a prepositional phrase, which is a noun, cannot function as the subject of a sentence.
 - **Example:** By creating a functional set design can help the audience believe the stage is a real place. ***A functional set design is actually the end of the prepositional phrase but it is also being used as the subject of the sentence.*
Revision: Creating a functional set design helps the audience believe the stage is a real place. ***The whole phrase "Creating a functional set design" becomes the subject of the sentence; we've*

eliminated the prepositional phrase altogether.

Revision: By creating a functional set design, the designer can help the audience believe the stage is a real place. ***The prepositional phrase remains discrete and an appropriate noun becomes the subject of the sentence.*

- **Faulty predication with verbs of being:** In the sentence "The child is happy," the verb "to be" is acting as a linking verb, basically saying the subject (the child) is equal to its complement (happy). If the subject and its complement don't match, we have a case of faulty predication.
 - **Example:** The resolving power of an electron microscope is keenly aware of life invisible to the human eye. ***A microscope's power cannot be keenly aware, but people can be.*
 - Revision:** The resolving power of an electron microscope helps us to be keenly aware of life invisible to the human eye.
 - Revision:** Aided by the resolving power of an electron microscope, we have grown keenly aware of life invisible to the human eye.

- **Faulty predication with *when, if, or where*:** Phrases beginning with these words are acting as subject complements, but are not grammatically correct.
 - **Example:** Electron illumination is if beams of electrons instead of light are used in a microscope.
 - Example:** Electron illumination is when beams of electrons instead of light are used in a microscope.
 - Revision:** Electron illumination is the process of using beams of electrons in a microscope instead of light.
 - Example:** The reason electron microscopes have become essential to research is because their resolving power is roughly 500,000 times greater than the power of the human eye.
 - Revision:** Electron microscopes are essential to research because their resolving power is roughly 500,000 times greater than the power of the human eye.