

Composition Writing/ Morning Studies/ Second Stage

Lecture 1

The Sentence

The sentence in English can be defined in many ways and forms. Some of these definitions are listed as follows:

- It is a group of words expressing a complete thought.
- It is an expression of thought or feeling by means of a word or words used in such forms and manner as to convey the meaning intended
- It is an oral or written communication made up of one or more units, each of which contains a complete utterance formed according to a definite pattern
- It is a communication in words conveying a sense of completeness containing at least one independent verb with its subject.
- It is a word or group of words standing between the initial Capital letter and a mark of end punctuation or between two marks of end punctuation.

Types of sentences

Simple, Compound, Complex, and Compound-Complex

- Simple Sentences

A simple sentence contains a subject and a verb. It expresses a single complete thought that can stand on its own.

Examples:

1. The baby cried for food.

(There is a subject and a verb that expresses a complete thought).

2. Professor Maple's intelligent students completed and turned in their homework.

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Note: A simple sentence does not necessarily have to be short. It can have adjectives. In this case, there are two verbs “completed” and “turned in.” However, the sentence expresses one complete thought and therefore is a simple sentence.

3. Megan and Ron ate too much and felt sick.

(Although there are two subjects and two verbs, it is still a simple sentence because both verbs share the same subjects and express one complete thought).

Compound Sentences

- A compound sentence has two independent clauses. An independent clause is a part of a sentence that can stand alone because it contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought. Basically, a compound contains two simple sentences.

These independent clauses are joined by a conjunction (**for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**).

Examples:

1. The shoplifter had stolen clothes, so he ran once he saw the police.

(Both sides of the conjunction “so” are complete sentences. “The shoplifter had stolen clothes” can stand alone and so can “he ran once he saw the police.” Therefore, this is a compound sentence).

2. They spoke to him in Spanish, but he responded in English.

(This is also a compound sentence that uses a conjunction to separate two individual clauses).

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Complex Sentences

- A complex sentence is an independent clause joined by one or more dependent clauses. A dependent clause either lacks a subject or a verb or has both a subject and a verb that does not express a complete thought. A complex sentence always has a subordinator (**as, because, since, after, although, when**) or relative pronouns (**who, that, which**).

Examples:

1. **After eating lunch at The Cheesecake Factory, Tim went to the gym to exercise.**

(The independent clause is ‘Tim went to the gym to exercise.’ The subordinating clause before it is dependent on the main, independent clause. If one were to say “after eating lunch at The Cheesecake Factory,” it would be an incomplete thought).

2. **Opinionated women are given disadvantages in societies that privilege male accomplishments.**

(The subject is “opinionated women” and the verb is “are given.” The first part of the sentence “opinionated women are given disadvantages in societies” is an independent clause that expresses a complete thought. The following “that privilege male accomplishments” is a relative clause that describes which types of societies).

3. **The woman who taught Art History 210 was fired for stealing school supplies.**

(The dependent clause in this sentence is “who taught Art History 210” because if removed, the rest of the sentence would stand as an independent clause. “Who taught Art History 210” is an adjective clause that provides necessary details about the subject, woman).

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Avoiding Shifts

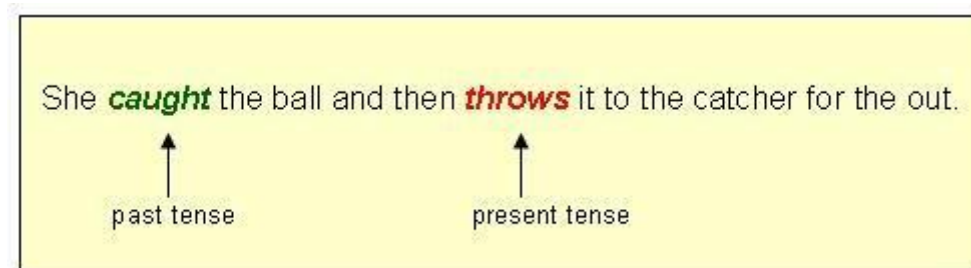
Writers should keep the elements in a sentence consistent, avoiding any unnecessary changes in tense, voice, mood, person and number. Such unnecessary changes, or "shifts," may make reading difficult and obscure the sentence's meaning for the reader.

Avoid shifts in

1. Verb tense

Except for special cases where the intended meaning requires a change in tense, maintain the same tense within a sentence.

Error: shift in verb tense



The sentence above begins in the past tense but shifts, without reason, to the present tense.

Error repaired

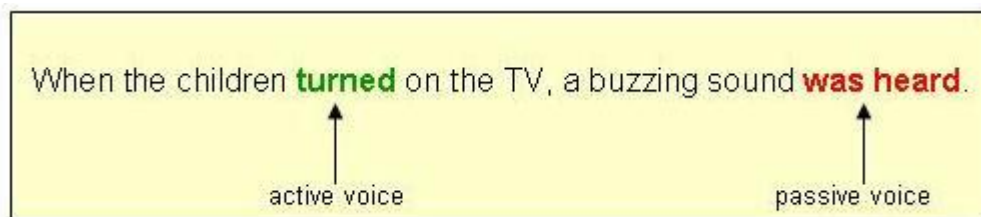


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2. Voice

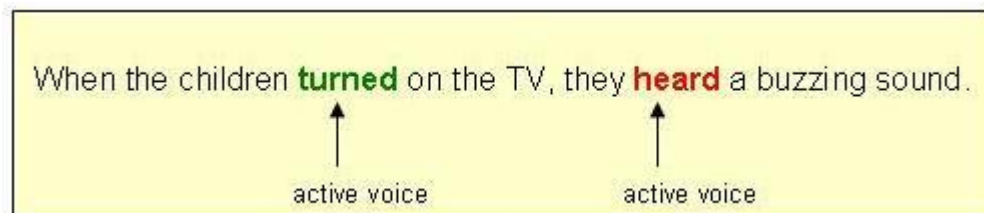
The voice of a verb may be either active or passive in a sentence. When a sentence contains two or more verbs, both verbs should maintain the same voice.

Error - shift in voice



The sentence above begins in active voice but shifts without reason to passive voice.

Error repaired

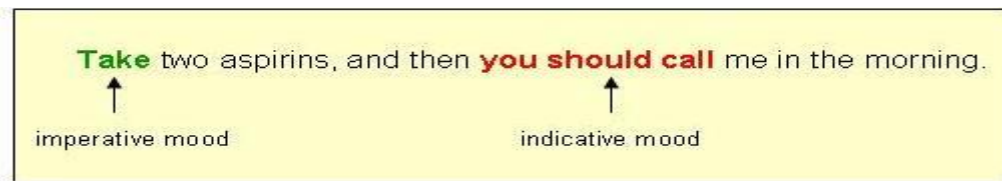


3. Mood

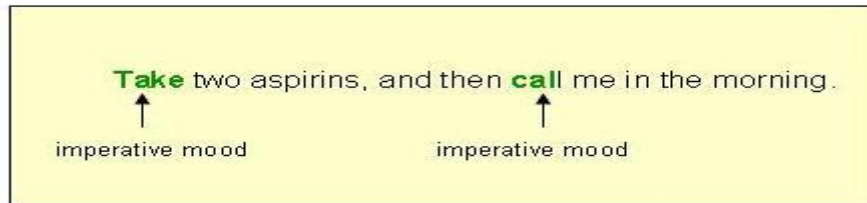
Shifts in mood often occur with directions, where the mood shifts from indicative to imperative or from imperative to indicative.

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Error - shift in mood



Error repaired



4. Person

English has three "persons" or points of view:

- First person - the speaker

I, me, my, mine, we, us, our, ours

- Second person - the person spoken to

you, your, yours

- Third person - the person or thing spoken about

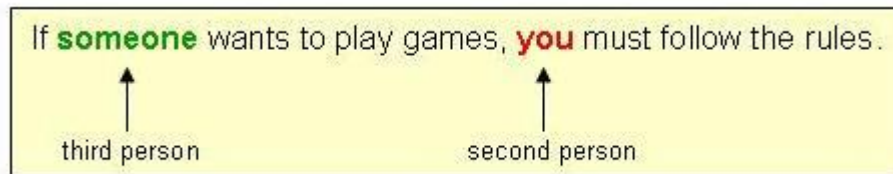
he, him, his, she, her, hers, it, its, they, them, their

Unless the meaning of a sentence clearly requires a change, keep person consistent within a sentence.

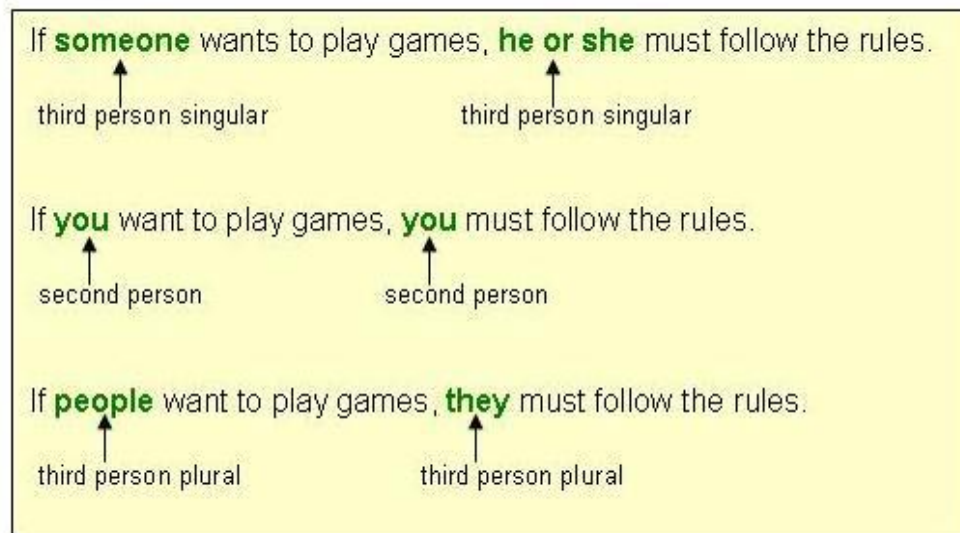
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Shifts in person usually occur with changes from the third to the second person point of view.

Error - shift in person



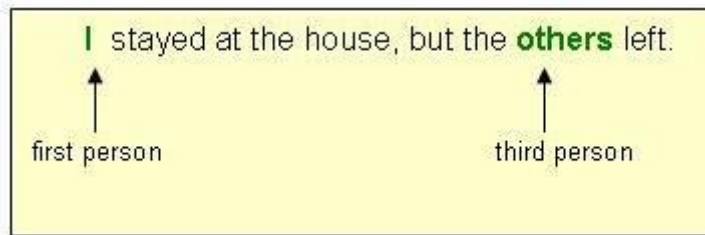
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If the meaning of a sentence clearly requires a change, then you may change person as needed.

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Example requiring a change in person

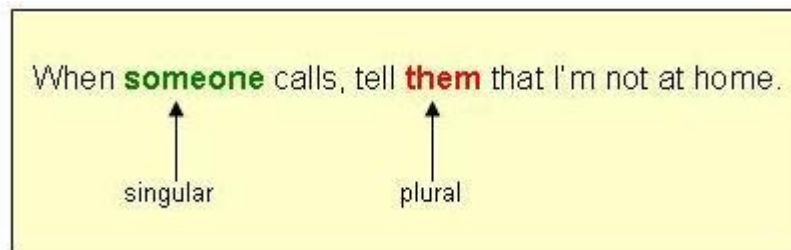


Since both *I* and *the others* are doing something in the above sentence, the shift in person is justified.

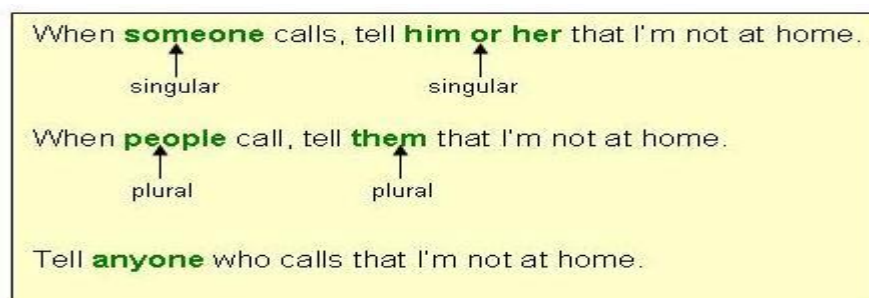
5. Number

Use singular pronouns to refer to singular antecedents; use plural pronouns to refer to plural antecedents.

Error - shift in number



Error repaired



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