

SUBJECT VERB SEPARATION

Adapted from Gopen and Swan "The Science of Scientific Writing"

Readers expect the **subject** of a sentence to be followed by the **verb**. When the does not follow the subject, the meaning of the sentence may be unclear. Therefore, when interrupting material separates the subject and the verb, readers may struggle to understand the relationship between the subject and verb, making the sentence unclear.

Remember:

The **Subject** and **verb** should be as close together as possible in a sentence.

Notice how the reader must work harder than necessary to understand the following sentences:

1. **Precipitation** in the form of crystalline water ice, consisting of snowflakes that fall from clouds, **is** called snow.
2. The **meeting**, inconveniently scheduled at 9 a.m., causing many commuters to become delayed and frustrated, **was postponed**.
3. A **variety** of measures to quantify happiness, some more effective and accurate than others, **were used**.

Now notice how the follow sentences are easier to understand by more closely connecting the subject and the verb:

1. **Snow is** precipitation in the form of crystalline water ice that consists of snowflakes that fall from clouds.
2. The **meeting was postponed**, since its inconvenient scheduling at 9 a.m. caused many commuters to become delayed and frustrated.
3. A **variety** of measures **were used** to quantify happiness, some more effective and accurate than others.