

Split Constructions: Keeping It Together

Writers have been known to split phrases apart and create split constructions. Sometimes split construction makes sense, but as a general rule, it should be avoided. Let's see why:

1. Split infinitives. An infinitive is *to* plus a verb (*to run, to quilt, to read*). When you split it, you are putting words between *to* and the verb:
We had *to* before we did anything else *take* a shower.
We had *to take* a shower before we did anything else.
2. Splitting subject and verb or verb and object:
John *rang* with his last bit of strength, *the bell*.
John, with his last bit of strength, *rang* the bell.
John rang the bell with his last bit of strength.
3. Splitting the preposition from its object:
She went *for*, because she was open, *the basket*.
Because she was open, she went *for the basket*.
4. Splitting the verb phrase:
John *has*, even though you wouldn't know it, *had* another birthday.
Even though you wouldn't know it, John *has had* another birthday.

For clarity's sake, keep words together that should be together, otherwise your reader has to work hard to understand what is happening!