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!