Split Infinitives

A debated grammatical rule—to not be or not to be?

# Explanation

The word *to* plus a verb is called an **infinitive**. There is a common grammatical rule that no word should come between this infinitive construction *to + verb*. For example, it would be grammatically incorrect to say/write “I had to literally laugh my head off…” When a word is placed between the “to” and the verb that follows, the phrase feels interrupted and becomes a **split infinitive.**

# Examples

1. Error: She told us to slowly walk down the street. (the infinitive *to walk* is split by the adverb *slowly*)

Better: She told us to walk down the street slowly.

1. Error: If you want *to quickly run*, be careful. (the infinitive *to run* is split by an an adverb quickly)

Better: If you want to run quickly, be careful.

1. Error: I had to literally laugh my head off.

Better: I literally had to laugh my head off.

Best: Not to use “literally” there at all because it is a misuse of the word “literal.” :)

# Exercises

***Determine whether the following sentences contain a split infinitive and correct those that do.***

1. **My supervisor wanted me to quickly file a document, but I did not have the time.**
2. **Students are expected to work on their math tests carefully.**
3. **Starship Enterprise’s continuing mission is to explore strange new worlds, seek out new life and new civilizations, and to boldly go where no man has gone before.**
4. **It’s okay to accidently call someone.**
5. **She did not tell us we had to slowly walk around the pool.**
6. **I wanted to talk to her quietly, but she wouldn’t let me.**
7. **They asked me where to eagerly wait.**
8. **He wanted to secretly talk to me about the issue.**