

Revising Sentences: Beginnings

The rule “All sentences shall have a subject and a verb” is one of the top ten commandments of grammar. However, there is no rule that says all sentences have to *begin* with a subject and a verb. Professional writers know that varying sentence beginnings is one way to hold their audience’s attention.

The first sentence in each pair below begins with the subject. The second sentence has been revised to vary the sentence beginning.

Montresor cunningly plans his vengeance against Fortunato.
Cunningly, Montresor plans his vengeance against Fortunato.

Fortunato is wearing a costume because it is the carnival season.
Because it is the carnival season, Fortunato is wearing a costume.

Methods of Varying Sentence Beginnings

USING SINGLE-WORD MODIFIERS
Eager , Fortunato followed Montresor to the catacombs. [adjective first]
Excitedly , Fortunato followed Montresor to the catacombs. [adverb first]
Deceived , Fortunato followed Montresor to the catacombs. [participle first]
USING PHRASES
In good faith , Fortunato followed Montresor to the catacombs. [prepositional phrase first]
Thinking of amontillado , Fortunato followed Montresor to the catacombs. [participial phrase first]
To taste the amontillado , Fortunato followed Montresor to the catacombs. [infinitive phrase first]
A true fool , Fortunato followed Montresor to the catacombs. [appositive phrase first]
USING SUBORDINATE CLAUSES
Because he was proud of his wine expertise , Fortunato followed Montresor to the catacombs. [adverb clause first]

Exercise Revising Sentences to Vary Sentence Beginnings

Revise each of the following sentences according to the directions in brackets. You will not need to add information to any of the sentences; simply move, change, or delete words and change punctuation where necessary.

1. I ran into Montresor in the city plaza. *[Begin with a prepositional phrase.]*

2. I looked striking wearing my striped jester costume. *[Begin with a participial phrase.]*

3. I could tell he was glad to see me, because he shook my hand for almost a minute. *[Begin with an adverb clause.]*

4. He told me a far-fetched story about buying some amontillado. He was talking breathlessly. *[Create one sentence beginning with a participial phrase.]*

5. I pretended, for a little while, that I was interested even though I felt sorry for him. *[Begin with an adverb clause.]*

6. I knew that he must have been swindled, because one simply can't find amontillado these days. *[Begin with an adverb clause.]*

7. "Go ask Luchesi, if you need a *real* expert," I told him at last. *[Begin quoted sentence with an adverb clause.]*

8. Montresor, gesturing, pulled a trowel from under his cloak. *[Begin the sentence with a participle.]*

9. Montresor, a man jealous of his family's honor, carefully planned his revenge. *[Begin with an appositive phrase.]*

10. The narrator hearkened to the bells on Fortunato's cap and heard his enemy even when he did not speak. *[Begin with a participial phrase.]*

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Answers are not available Online.