

## Agreement between Implied vs. Actual Subjects

*In this worksheet we step out of the realm of punctuation to bring attention to a common error.*

*When opening a sentence with an introductory participial phrase, or any adjectival phrase, many writers fail to make the implied subject of the phrase agree with the actual subject of the sentence (as the implied subject of this sentence agrees with its actual subject). Strunk and White in The Elements of Style provide excellent examples of the ways this lack of agreement can create ambiguity. Here is their final, “ludicrous” example: “Being in a dilapidated condition, I was able to buy the house very cheap.” Remember, the introductory phrase should point toward the subject of the sentence.*

### Examples that lack agreement

1. Having read through a wide range of Boswell’s manuscripts, he certainly appears to be an author who recorded life with extraordinary detail. {*The implied subject is someone who has read a wide range of Boswell’s manuscripts; the actual subject is Boswell.*}
2. Speaking much too quickly, the audience was befuddled by the speech. {*The implied subject is someone speaking; the actual subject is the audience listening to the speech.*}
3. After hearing that the schnauzer had saved the beloved key, the dog was heartily congratulated by its family. {*Here we have a complex introductory prepositional phrase. The implied subject is the person or persons who heard about the heroic schnauzer; the actual subject is the schnauzer itself.*}
4. Old and cranky, the telephone was despised by the professor. {*The implied subject is the old and cranky professor; the actual subject is the telephone.*}

**Agreement between implied and actual subjects**

***Sample Sentences***

*Rewrite the following sentences so that implied and actual subjects agree.*

1. Running every morning at 6 am, the road became an old friend to Todd.

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2. Upon discovering that shoes were less expensive when bought on line, several pairs were bought for the family.

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3. Unhappy and discouraged by the weather, the garden was planted despite the rainy day.

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4. Having grasped the connection between exercise and good eating, the garden took on greater significance in the family's life.

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5. Without proper knowledge of fertilizer, the potatoes were inundated by Todd's friend.

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**Agreement between implied and actual subjects**

6. An easy thing to blunder, Cue didn't know the first thing about fertilizer.

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7. E-mailing Todd later that evening, the predicament could not have been more predictable.

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8. An early sleeper, the e-mail did not arrive until after Todd was in bed.

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9. With a certain melancholy apprehension, time needed to pass before Cue would know the truth.

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10. Lucky for him, both potatoes and garden recovered quickly.

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