

Split Infinitives

Students sometimes receive comments on their essays about their use of 'split infinitives'. In formal written work split infinitives are a 'no, no'. The most famous (arguably) split infinitive is:

TO BOLDLY GO WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE.

The first three words represent the 'split infinitive'. Infinitive refers to a form of a verb. It is a form that needs no object, and is not constrained by time:

Examples

to go, to sit, to think, to believe, to see

A 'split infinitive' means that 'to' is split from the root verb by another word:
to seriously think, to strongly believe, to clearly see.

The correct positioning of these words (they are ADVERBS... 'Add to' verbs) is after the infinitive:

to think **seriously**, to believe **strongly**, to see **clearly**.

Whilst the phrase TO BOLDLY GO... etc is incorrect, split infinitives can be used for dramatic effect.

'To go boldly where no man has been before'.

Whilst grammatically correct the phrase does not have the same impact as the original (incorrect) form.

Check your work for all forms of verbs which contain two words e.g. **are sitting, was surveyed, were questioned** and ensure that you have not split the form with an adverb.

e.g. were thoroughly questioned	X	were questioned thoroughly	✓
was widely surveyed	X	was surveyed widely	✓
are comfortably sitting	X	are sitting comfortably .	✓

NOTE on ADVERBS

Adverbs describe HOW something is/was done, so they add to the verb. They commonly end in 'ly', and they often appear at the end of a phrase or sentence; always **after** the verb (in whichever form the verb takes).