**Unnecessary Shifts in Sentences**

Within a sentence a shift is a change from one subject to another or from one verb to another.

Often shifts are acceptable because they are necessary to express the meaning the writer intends.

The smoothness of a sentence is sometimes seriously affected, however, by an unnecessary and awkward shift.

To be consistent, avoid unnecessary shifts

1. in person

2. in number

3. in verb tense

4. in voice

5. in mood and

6. in discourse

1. **Shifts in Person**

Shifts in person usually occur with changes from the third to the second person point of view.

1. **Shifts in Number**

Use singular pronouns to refer to singular antecedents; use plural pronouns to refer to plural antecedents.

1. **Shifts in Verb Tense:**

Except for special cases where the intended meaning requires a change in tense, maintain the same tense within a sentence.

1. **Shifts in Voice:**

The voice of a verb may be either active or passive in a sentence.  When a sentence contains two or more verbs, both verbs should maintain the same voice.

**Exception**: Emphasis on subject *requires* shift in voice.

1. **Shift in Mood**

Modern English has three *moods, or ways in* which a verb can express action: indicative, imperative, and subjunctive.

Shifts in mood often occur with directions, where the mood shifts from indicative to imperativeor from imperative to indicative.

1. **Shift in Discourse**

Discourse can be classified as direct and indirect.

A shift in discourse occurs when, within a sentence, the writer uses the format of one form (direct or indirect) and shifts some part to the format of the other.

**Unnecessary Shift: Practice Activities**

**Revise the following sentences which contain unnecessary shifts from one subject to another or from one verb to another. Write A near the sentences which contain an acceptable shift.**

1. Firemen rushed to the scene, but only a pile of ashes was found.

2. If the whole committee votes, George will be elected.

3. Young people not only enjoy a few weeks away from home at the summer camp, but many valuable

things are learned from the experience.

4. Since ever city has its own zoo, supplying wild animals to zoos has become a profitable business.

5. The flour and the butter should be mixed into the paste, and add a small amount of milk.

6. Properly equipped men can survive for months in the Arctic and no ill effects will be suffered.

7. When his father spoke to him about going to college, Walter says that he doesn't want to take so

much money from the family at a time when living expenses were high.

8. The experienced yachtsman is aware of danger of fire, and, when filling the gas tank, great

precautions are taken to spill gasoline in the bottom of the boat.

9. Many doctors recognize the value of health insurance, but the particular kind we should have is

something they could not agree on.

10. The Russian demands were unacceptable even though some concessions are contained in them.

11. A good student can win college scholarship, and thus his parents are relieved of the part of the cost of his college education.

12. It was a clear December morning when my friend Joe called me and asks me to go for a plane ride with him. I always liked Joe, and so you are glad to go anywhere with him? I accepted the nvitation and Joe says he will meet me at the airport in an hour. This was the beginning of the most frightening experience of my life.

**Directions: Revise the following sentences to eliminate unnecessary shifts in tense, mood, voice, or person and number and between direct and indirect discourse. Most of the items can be revised in more than one way.**

1. The greed of the 1980s gave way to the occupational insecurity of the 1990s, which in turn gives way to reinforced family ties in the early 2000s.   
2. The building inspector suggested that we apply for a construction permit and that we should check with his office again when the plans are complete.   
3. She studied the package, wondered what could it be, and tore off the wrapping.   
4. Suddenly, we heard an explosion of wings off to our right, and you could see a hundred or more ducks lifting off from the water.   
5. In my previous job, I sold the most advertising sports and was given a sales excellence award.   
6. A cloud of snow powder rose as skis and poles fly in every direction.   
7. The flight attendant said, “Please turn off all electronic devices,” but that we could use them again after takeoff.   
8. Workers with computer skills were in great demand, and a programmer could almost name their salary.   
9. When in Florence, be sure to see the cityʼs famed cathedral, and many tourists also visit Michelangeloʼs statue David.   
10. The aroma, which wafts through the house, lured the adults from their beds.

**Eliminate shifts in person and number between, as well as within, sentences. Some sentences may not need revision.**

(1) In Agra, India, millions of visitors to the Taj Mahal see a glorious white-marble building that serves as a tribute to undying love, but you also see pollution and serious deterioration of the property. (2) Huge crowds arrive daily to see the gorgeous Taj Mahal, which is perfect in its architectural proportions and is topped with beautiful minarets. (3) But he or she also sees terrible neglect, such as huge beehives hanging from archways, litter on the lawns and in the gardens, and canals choked with trash. (4) The whole place smells of pigeon droppings, decorative panels are faded and destroyed, and many sections are off limits to sightseers. (5) Soon visitors will enter through a new, clean tourist center, complete with a café and computerized ticketing, and you will find a tour of the cleansed, restored monument to eternal love a very pleasant experience.

**Proofread the following paragraph for consistency, and correct any unnecessary shifts. You may want to omit some words or phrases***.*

Many people think that recycling material is a modern trend. However, during World War II, more than 43 percent of America’s newsprint was recycled, and the average person saved bacon grease and other meat fat, which they returned to local collection centers. What you would do is pour leftover fat and other greasy gunk from frying pans and pots into tin cans. Today, despite the fact that many people are recycling, a little more than half of Americans’ waste is actually recycled. The problem is not to get us to save bottles and cans but to convince industry to use more recycled materials. There is a concern expressed by manufacturers that they would be using materials of uneven quality and will face undependable delivery. If manufacturers would wake up and smell the coffee, they would see the advantages for the country and bigger profits could be made by them.

**Collaborative Activities**

1. On a separate sheet of paper, write five sentences that include shifts from present to past tense, some logical and some illogical. Exchange papers with another person in your group, and revise any incorrect

sentences.

2. As a group, make up a test with five sentences containing illogical shifts in tense, person, and voice. Exchange tests with another group in the class. After you have taken their test, compare your answers with theirs.

**Revise the following sentences which contain unnecessary shifts from one subject to another or from one verb to another. Write A near the sentences which contain an acceptable shift.**

1. Firemen rushed to the scene, but only a pile of ashes was found.A

2. If the whole committee votes, George will be elected.A

3. Young people not only enjoy a few weeks away from home at the summer camp, but many valuable

things are learned from the experience. Shift (subject) they learn many valuable things from the ex..

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5. The flour and the butter should be mixed into the paste, and add a small amount of milk. shift verb

Mix the flour and the butter into the paste and add a small amount of milk

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precautions are taken to spill gasoline in the bottom of the boat. subject

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something they could not agree on. Subject but they could not agree on the particular kind

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2.The building inspector suggested that we apply for a construction permit and that we should check with his office again when the plans are complete. mood

The building inspector suggested us to apply for a construction permit and check with his office again when the plans would be complete

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10. The aroma(smell), which wafts(to be moved) through the house, lured(s)(attract) the adults from their beds.

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