

# Grammar Lesson 7 - Split Infinitives

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**Infinitive:** A verb preceded by the word **to**.

Examples: to write, to read, to take, to examine.

**Split Infinitive:** A situation where given an infinitive, an *adverb* comes between the word **to** and the verb itself.

**\*\*AVOID splitting infinitives in formal writing.**, in everyday speech, we commonly split infinitives abundantly and this is generally speaking acceptable.

1. Example:

*Incorrect* : She decided **to instantly quit** her job.

*Correct* : She decided to quit her job **instantly**.

2. Don't split infinitives for "degree adverbs" such as **completely, entirely, unduly**.

*Incorrect* : It's hard **to completely follow** his reasoning.

*Correct* : It's hard to follow his reasoning **completely**.

3. At times, **not** splitting infinitives creates ambiguity.

- The patient was told **to occasionally monitor** her blood sugar level.
- The patient was told **occasionally to monitor** her blood sugar level.  
(This slightly changes the meaning as the word **occasionally** is modifying the verb **told**.)
- The patient was told to monitor her blood sugar level **occasionally**.  
(Here both views may be correct, one could argue that **occasionally** is modifying either the verb **told** **monitor**, hence it is ambiguous).
- (\*\*) The patient was told **to monitor occasionally** her blood sugar level.

4. Avoid sentences with more than one infinitive.

*Avoid* : Our company decided to legally and rightfully seek damages for fraudulent use of the company documents.

If necessary, then reword as follows,

*Correct* : Legally and rightfully, our company decided to seek damages for fraudulent use of the company documents.

*Correct* : Our company decided to seek damages in a legal and rightful way for fraudulent use of the company documents.

*Split Infinitives*, Effective Writing Practice Tutorial, Northern Illinois University.