

Answers and Teaching Tips

1. After finally applying the prescribed medication for a few days, is when Michael started feeling better.

Revision 1: After finally applying the prescribed medication for a few days, ~~is when~~ Michael started feeling better.

Revision 2: Michael started feeling better after finally applying the prescribed medication for a few days.

Revision 3: Michael started feeling better after he applied the prescribed medication for a few days.

Revision 4: After **he applied** the prescribed medication for a few days, Michael started **to feel** better.

Teaching Tip: Revision 3 seems the clearest. It takes the agent (the "doer" of the action) and makes him the grammatical subject of the sentence. It does the same thing with the "after" clause. Note that the subject of the verb "applied" is "he."

2. Sometimes because of our jobs it prevents us from spending more time with the whole family and is the reason that normally we all get together on holidays.

Revision 1: Sometimes ~~because of~~ our jobs ~~it prevent~~ us from spending more time with the whole family; ~~and is the reason that~~ **therefore, we** normally all get together on holidays.

Revision 1 (without the crossing out): Sometimes our jobs **prevent** us from spending more time with the whole family; **therefore, we** normally all get together on holidays.

Revision 2: We don't spend as much time as we would like with our families because of our jobs, **so we** normally all get together on holidays.

Teaching Tip: The key to clear writing is rewriting. Revision 2 places the agent (the "doer" of the action) as the grammatical subject. This little act makes sentences easier to read than if we hide the agent somewhere in the sentence.

3. Now that the little boy lied to his aunt makes him believe that there is no Jesus.

Revision 1: **Because** the little boy lied to his aunt, **he no longer** believes **in** Jesus.

Revision 2: The little boy **no longer** believes **in** Jesus **because** he lied to his aunt.

Revision 3: Now that the little boy lied to his aunt, **he does not** believe **in** Jesus.

4. In my opinion of the Aesop fable is that I don't think the old gardener was playing a trick on his sons, however, it was a lesson that the old gardener wanted to teach his sons about the orchard.

Revision 1: Regarding the Aesop fable, I don't think the old gardener was playing a trick on his sons; it was a lesson that the old gardener wanted to teach his sons about the orchard.

Revision 2: The old gardener was **not** playing a trick on his sons; **he** was teaching his sons a lesson **about the importance of cultivating** the orchard.

Teaching Tip: Revision 1 attempts to stay true to the original, and many students will try to rewrite the sentence faithfully. Don't encourage them to do so. Ask them to think of what they believe to be the intended meaning. Then ask them to put the agent as the grammatical subject. Ask them to disentangle the wording so that a subject-verb-object pattern is maintained.

The expression "In my opinion" detracts from the credibility of the writer and adds words to a sentence without adding content. Unless the writer attributes an opinion to someone else, an opinion expressed in a sentence (or essay) is the opinion of the writer.

5. By telling them of a treasure will be found in the garden was a perfect way to have his sons involve in the garden, for his the old gardener didn't have much time to live.

Revision 1: ~~By Telling~~ them of a treasure ~~will to~~ be found in the garden was a perfect way to have his sons involved in the garden, ~~for his~~ **because** the old gardener didn't have much time to live.

Revision 1 (without the cross outs): Telling them of a treasure **to** be found in the garden was a perfect way to have his sons involved in the garden **because** the old gardener didn't have much time to live.

Revision 2: The old gardener didn't have much time to live, so telling his sons about a treasure to be found in the garden was a perfect way to have them involved in the garden.

Revision 3: The old gardener told his sons about a treasure in the garden because the gardener didn't have much time to live and he wanted his sons involved in **cultivating** the garden.

Teaching Tip: Revision 1 tweaks the original to make it logical (somewhat). Revision 2 recasts the entire sentence. Revision 3 makes the intended meaning clear. Ask students to play with the sentences to see what different senses they might come up with. The key is to try to make the agent the grammatical subject.

6. First reason why I treasure my watch is because my sister bought it for me before she left for the army.

Revision 1: I treasure my watch because my sister bought it for me before she left for the army.

Revision 2: First, I treasure my watch because my sister bought it for me before she left for the army.

Teaching Tip: The original sentence is a variant of "The reason why I xxx is because...." These sentences are unnecessarily wordy. Encourage students to express themselves simply with the word because. Writers can always (?) eliminate the words "the reason why ... is" from these sentences.

For example,

Confusing: The reason I passed the AP test is because I studied three hours every night.

Revision: ~~The reason~~ I passed the AP test ~~is~~ because I studied three hours every night.

7. When I was about 6, I watched my mom stare at her miniature spoon collection before she walked out the door forever. I thought why would she do that.

Revision 1: When I was about 6, I watched my mom stare at her miniature spoon collection before she walked out the door forever. I thought, "Why would she do that?"

Revision 2: When I was about 6, I watched my mom stare at her miniature spoon collection before she walked out the door forever. I always wondered why she would do that.

Teaching Tip: This is a fairly common construction, the inclusion (and confusion) of a question with a declarative sentence. I prefer **Revision 2** because the sentence does not use quotation and conveys a sense of the obvious befuddlement that the writer felt about the experience.

8. By running for student council was the reason why Roderick improved his popularity.

Revision 1: By running for student council, Roderick improved his popularity.

Revision 2: Roderick improved his popularity by running for student council.

Revision 3: Running for student council improved Roderick's popularity.

Teaching Tip: Revision 2 is cleaner than 3 because it places a human being (Roderick) as the subject; however, it includes a prepositional phrase, making the sentence longer than it has to be. I prefer Revision 3 because the sentence states the reason for Roderick's popularity first, and it uses a single verb – improved.