

To “ing” or Not to “ing.” – Starting a Sentence with an “ing” Word
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I’ve been told in writing workshops that having too many sentences in your manuscript that start with a word ending in “ing” is a sign of amateur writing. I’ve also read that it’s a sign of lazy writing. I have to admit, years ago, I suffered from this illness. It wasn’t until I took an online course in Romance Writing, taught by author Lori Wilde, that I realized how many “ing” sentences I had in my manuscript (a manuscript that will never know what it’s like to be book). And to make it worse, most of these sentences were grammatically incorrect. *How dare I?*

If you stop and think about the logistics of the sentence, it’s actually very simple to figure out if the sentence is correct or not. For example:

Parking the car, Joanne got out and ran up the driveway.

What do you think? Is it correct? Ask yourself, can she park the car and simultaneously get out of the car? I don’t think so. Not unless Joanne has some unknown superpower. First, she has to park the car, then she can get out of the car. The two actions are consecutive; therefore, the sentence should read...

Joanne parked the car, then she got out and ran up the driveway.

Or, if you want to make it more punchy...

Joanne parked the car, got out, and ran up the driveway.

Here’s another example:

Crying, she tore up the letter and threw the pieces in the trash.

What do you think? Correct or incorrect? Can she simultaneously cry and tear up the letter? Of course she can. No special superpower needed here.

Another example:

Fishing her keys out of her purse, Joanne opened the front door.

Correct or Incorrect? Can Joanne fish her keys out of her purse at the exact same time she’s unlocking the door? Not unless she’s using telekinesis. (Wouldn’t that be useful? 😊)

This one is incorrect. The correct version of this sentence would be...

Joanne fished her keys out of her purse and opened the front door.

One last example:

Balancing on one foot, she bent forward and touched the floor.

Correct or incorrect? Can she balance on one foot and tip forward to touch the floor, all at the same time? Well...that depends on good she is at yoga!

(My husband and I did that this morning. He managed to balance himself. I touched the tip of my raised toes to the edge of the sofa for support. It was either that or fall on the floor. 😊)

As for the logistics of the sentence, it is correct.

Thank you for reading. And your readers thank you for writing better sentences.