

## *Alternatives to Using There Are at the Start of Sentences*

Although it is technically not wrong to do so, try to avoid starting a sentence with *there* followed by any verb of being. For example, try not to start a sentence with any of the following phrases: *there is, there are, there will be, there have been*, and several others.

It is not really wrong to start a sentence with one of these phrases, but it is very unnecessary, and it is not the best, most effective phrasing that can be used.

The best method of phrasing the sentence would be to reword the sentence in order to eliminate and to avoid the *there* phrase completely.

Here are some examples:

**Unnecessary:** There are three characters in this story who are very important.

**Better:** Three characters in this story are very important.

The word *there* in the first sentence is referred to as a “dummy subject.” That means that it is not the true subject of the sentence. Find the word or words in the sentence that are the true subject and then begin the sentence with those words.

Here are some more examples:

**Unnecessary:** There comes at the end of this story a very surprising ending.

**Better:** A very surprising ending comes at the end of this story.

**Unnecessary:** There is something about this poem that almost defies analysis.

**Better:** Something about this poem almost defies analysis.

Can you change the following sentences by correctly eliminating the *there* phrase?

1. There are some short stories that have truly become classics.
2. There is one symbol in this poem that is the most important one to analyze.
3. There have been many attempts by readers to find too much symbolism in Poe’s “The Raven.”

## *The Proper Use of There is . . . There are*

When you are trying to decide if the verb *is* or *are* goes after the word *There*, just remember the following information.

First of all, the correct verb could be either *is* or *are*. It all depends on what's in the rest of the sentence. Here is a simple, step-by-step procedure to follow that will help you determine the proper verb to use:

1. First, totally ignore the word *There*. Pretend it's not even in the sentence at all.
2. Next, let your eye travel down the sentence to the right until you come to the first noun and then stop.
3. Determine if that first noun is singular or plural.
4. If that first noun is singular, then go back and put *is* (or any other singular form verb) into the blank space after *There*.
5. On the other hand, if that first noun is plural, then go back and put *are* (or any other plural form verb) into the blank space after *There*.

The above steps also apply to a sentence beginning with the word Here.

1. There \_\_\_\_\_ a large, brown envelope lying in the middle of the table.  
(is, are) (singular)
2. There \_\_\_\_\_ two tall pine trees on either side of the rusty metal gate.  
(is, are) (plural)
3. Last night, there \_\_\_\_\_ a bright full moon in the sky.  
(was, were) (singular)
4. Last year, there \_\_\_\_\_ two events that made headlines around the world.  
(was, were) (plural)
5. Here \_\_\_\_\_ an interesting example of how hard work pays off.  
(is, are) (singular)
6. Here \_\_\_\_\_ five good reasons why students should attend John A. Logan College.  
(is, are) (plural)