



3Cs MEDICAL WRITING

E D I T 2

Keep the Verb Close to the Subject

*The second of twelve edits for clear,
concise, coherent English.*

SEAMAN MEDICAL, INC.

Why it matters

When the verb arrives,
the subject must still
be fresh in mind.

- 1 Subject and verb far apart?
Readers lose the thread.
- 2 Long gaps disguise
the sentence's main action.
- 3 Non-native readers
struggle even more.

Keep them close

SUBJECT

VERB

Side by side, or nearly so.

*... so the reader doesn't lose
the subject before the verb arrives.*

If you must put words between them,
keep the gap as short as you can.

Verb far away

BIG GAP BETWEEN SUBJECT AND VERB

"Every step of the protocol, including patient screening, drug administration, and follow-up monitoring, was reviewed."

Where is the verb?

Keep reading...

After the subject, until the verb arrives, the reader can't make sense of the words in between.

See the gap

The subject (amber) and verb (blue) are separated by 9 words.

Every **step** of the protocol,
including patient screening,
drug administration, and follow-up
monitoring,
was reviewed.



SUBJECT



VERB

Gap: 9 words.

That's a lot to keep in mind!

Move the verb up

*Same words, same meaning.
The verb now sits beside the
subject.*

Every **step** of the protocol **was reviewed**, including patient screening, drug administration, and follow-up monitoring.

Gap: 0 words.

Reader understands it instantly.

K E Y P O I N T

Don't make readers
hunt for the verb.



*Keep subject and verb close.
Move other information out of the way.*

