

Throwing the book at Captain Hook

Written by gallupsun
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Before I slash at Captain Hook's character, I want to say this: if I could grow a twisty mustache like Captain Hook, I would absolutely do it. I wouldn't give up my hand for a boss pirate mustache, but I might be willing to give up the family dog.

We hear this one all the time: "I feel badly because Randolph lost his job at the pro shop." In an effort to have better grammar, we can often make it worse. So let's figure out why the correct phrase in the above instance should be "

I feel bad
."

The key here is knowing the difference between action verbs and linking verbs.

It seems rather obvious how to identify an action verb: it does something active. Active verbs like gobble, decide, shimmy, impeach and frolic tell us the action being performed in a sentence.

Linking verbs, on the other hand, connect the subject of a sentence to information about that subject. Linking verbs do not describe an action. Therefore, use adverbs to describe action verbs and adjectives to describe linking verbs.

Sensory-related verbs like feel, look, smell, taste, and sound can either be used as linking verbs or active verbs, depending on the context of the sentence. Kind of confusing if you ask me.

In our example where poor Randy got the heave-ho from the pro shop, "feel" is used as a

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linking verb. “I feel bad” describes the state of my emotions because Randolph was let go. The only way “ I feel badly” is correct is if, after being fired, Randolph got in his souped-up golf cart, put the pedal to the metal and—in an act of blind rage—he ran over all ten of my fingers as I carefully attempted to replace one of my several divots, rendering my sense of touch useless. In this case, “ I feel badly because Randolph lost his job at the pro shop,” would be correct.

With sensory verbs, it’s important to identify whether the verb is an active verb or a linking verb.

The way I always remember this takes me back to my tremendous AP English teacher, Dr. Ballard, who used this example: “Only Captain Hook feels badly.” Get it? Because he has a hook for a hand.

Would Captain Hook make a good masseuse? No, because Captain Hook feels badly. And he probably feels pretty bad about that.

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