



Developing the Complete Sentence

A complete sentence has a **subject** and a **verb**. It is also called a **clause**.

Subjects and verbs do specific things in sentences.

Subjects (nouns)  do an action in a sentence.

Verbs  a) show the action of a sentence in time (past, present, future).
b) join or link to the subject words that describe them.

Examples:

1. *Terry* and *Jack* play soccer.

s s v

2. The *mall* has many stores.

s v

3. The *computer* is new.

s v

Examples 1, 2, and 3 are simple sentences. A **simple sentence** is a clause which makes sense on its own. It is also called an **independent clause (IC)**.

A **compound sentence** contains two independent clauses joined with a coordinating conjunction. Coordinating conjunctions are *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*. They are also known as FANBOYS.

Examples:

1. It was raining hard, *and* there was a strong wind.

IC

IC

2. He was tired, *so* he went to bed.

IC

IC

3. The power went out, *so* I got scared.

IC

IC

A complex sentence contains both an independent clause and a **dependent clause (DC)**.

To check if a sentence is complete, first find the subject and the verb.

Finding Subjects

To find the subject of any sentence, ask the question: *who* or *what* is the sentence about?

Remember:

- *subjects usually come earlier in the sentence
- *subjects can be modified by adjectives
- *subjects can be compounded
- *subjects can be pronouns (he, she, it, they, we)
- *subjects must agree with verbs: a singular subject agrees with a singular verb, plural subjects agree with plural verbs

Exercise 1: Finding Subjects

Underline the subject in each of the following sentences.

1. The car veered off the bridge.
2. It crashed into the water.
3. Everyone was trapped inside.
4. She wondered what she could do.
5. Their lives were in danger.
6. A mysterious stranger appeared.
7. He pulled her to safety.
8. Her mom and dad were still inside the car.

Prepositional Phrases

A **prepositional phrase** is a group of words which contains a preposition and an object of the preposition with its modifiers. The nouns within prepositional phrases are never the subject of the sentence.

In sentences with prepositional phrases, the subject can be difficult to find.

In the young man's apartment, books covered the walls.

Since the subject of the sentence is never in the prepositional phrase, it is helpful to cross out the prepositional phrase.

~~In the young man's apartment~~, books covered the walls.

In this sentence, the noun *books* is the subject.

Common Prepositions

about	around	by	like	through
above	at	during	near	to, toward
across	before	for	of	under
after	beside	from	on	up, upon
among	between	in, into	over	with

Exercise 2: Finding Subjects

In each of these sentences, cross out any prepositional phrases. Then underline the subject.

~~In the house~~, a letter was found.

1. Caroline arrived at the house beside the church.
2. She knocked on the door.
3. From the table, the man looked across the room.
4. The girl has brought a letter from home.
5. With anticipation, she waited for him to read it.

Other Challenges in Finding Subjects

1. Changes in the normal subject position

Some sentences begin with words that indicate a question is being asked, such as *why*, *where*, *how* and *when*. These opening words are not the subject.

How did he find his sister in the city?

The word *how* is not the subject of the sentence. In this sentence, *he* is doing the action and *he* is the subject.

2. Using the word *there*

The word *there* can never be the subject of the sentence.

There is a new teacher in the department.

The word *there* is not the subject. The sentence is about a *teacher*, so a *teacher* is the subject.

3. Commands

Sometimes, a sentence contains a verb that gives an order.

Go to her house.
Help your sister.

In these examples, the subject *you* is not written, but it is understood.

4. Appositive Phrases

An appositive phrase is a group of words in a sentence that provides more information about a noun in a sentence.

The young girl, a popular cheerleader, waved to her friends.

In this sentence, the words *a popular cheerleader* make up an appositive phrase because they provide extra information about the young girl. Notice that commas are used to separate the appositive phrase from the rest of the sentence. If the appositive phrase is excluded, the thought is still complete.

The young girl waved to her friends.

The subject is *the young girl*. The subject of a sentence is never in the appositive phrase.

Exercise 3: Finding Hidden Subjects

To find the subject in these sentences, cross out any prepositional phrases or appositive phrases. Then underline the subject of each sentence.

1. Come in, please.
2. Where would you like to sit?
3. Here in my room are many comfortable chairs.
4. The cats, both calico, are very gentle.
5. They get along well with everyone.
6. How do you like animals?
7. There are many reasons to love them.

Finding Verbs

A. Action Verbs indicate what the subject is *doing*.

Elena *closed* her eyes.

The action verb also indicates *when* the subject does the action, either past, present or future tense.

Past: Elena *closed* her eyes.
Present: Elena *closes* her eyes.
Future: Elena *will close* her eyes.

Exercise 4: Finding Action Verbs

Find the action verb in each sentence by first underlining the subject and then circling the verb (the word that indicates what the subject is doing). Note also the time of the action (past, present or future).

1. A woman told her dream to several research scientists.
2. In the dream, she lay in bed alone.
3. Confusion and noise filled the room.
4. Suddenly, a middle-aged woman entered and gave her a key.
5. Later, a man came and led her upstairs to an unknown room.
6. Scientists asked several therapists to interpret the dream.
7. Each one proposed a different meaning.
8. According to one therapist, the woman suffered from being entirely passive.
9. According to another, this dream showed the woman's erotic impulses toward her own therapist!
10. The third therapist predicted a creative future for the young woman on the basis of this dream.

B. Linking Verbs *join* the subject of a sentence to words that describe or identify it.

Examples

The child *is* a dreamer.

The verb *is* links the subject *child* with the word *dreamer*.

She *seemed* distracted.

The verb *seems* links the subject *she* with the word *distracted*.

We *feel* sympathetic.

The verb *feel* links the subject *we* with the word *sympathetic*.

Common Linking Verbs

act	become	look
appear	feel	seem
be (am, is, are, was, were, have been)	grow	taste

Exercise 5: Finding Linking Verbs

Find the linking verb in each sentence by underlining the subject and the drawing a circle around the linking verb.

1. My dream last night was wonderful.
2. I had become middle-aged.
3. I appeared happy and relaxed.
4. The house was empty and quiet.
5. In the morning light, the kitchen felt cozy.
6. The brewing coffee smelled delicious.
7. The gluten-free vegan pancakes never tasted better.
8. I looked peaceful.
9. I seemed to have grown calmer.
10. I felt satisfied with life.

C. Helping Verbs are used to help the main verb express a special *time* or *meaning*.

Damon *is* sleeping.

Time: right now.

Damon *might* sleep.

Time: maybe now or in the future.

Damon *should* sleep.

Time: ought to now or in the future.

Damon *could have been* sleeping.

Time: maybe in the past.

Common Helping Verbs

be	can	might	should
have	could	must	will
do	may	shall	would

Remember: the verb phrase may contain words which are not verbs. These words are usually adverbs, which modify the verb.

Dreams can often give deeper insight into one's life.

The words *can* and *give* are verbs. The word *often* is an adverb.

That would not happen.

That would never happen.

In these examples, the words *would* and *happen* are verbs. The words *not* and *never* are adverbs.

Exercise 6: Finding Helping Verbs

Each of these sentences contains a helping verb and a main verb. First underline the subject and then circle the verb phrase.

1. There could be several advantages to keeping a diary.
2. In journals, writers can safely express their true feelings.
3. Well-kept diaries have helped people deal with change.
4. Diaries can improve one's life.
5. You will be able to capture your memories before they fade.
6. The improvement of language skills would also be important.
7. It may unexpectedly bring pleasure and satisfaction.

Clauses

A clause is a group of words that contain a subject and a verb. The two main types of clauses are independent and dependent.

Independent Clauses (IC)

An independent clause contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought. It is called independent because it can stand on its own as a complete sentence.

Joining Two Independent Clauses

Two independent clauses can be connected using either a coordinate conjunction (FANBOYS) or a conjunctive adverb.

When a FANBOYS word is used to connect two independent clauses, a comma is placed before the FANBOYS word.

When a conjunctive adverb is used to connect two independent clauses, a comma is placed after the conjunctive adverb.

These rules are summarized in the following formulas:

IC , fanboys word IC

IC ; conjunctive adverb , IC

Common Conjunctive Adverbs

first	also	consequently
second	furthermore	for example
last	in addition	in other words
next	moreover	on the other hand
finally	therefore	that is

Exercise 7: Coordination

Connect the two independent clauses in each question twice, once by using a FANBOY word and then by a conjunctive adverb.

Example

The students visited the Writing Centre frequently. Their grades improved.

A. The students visited the Writing Centre frequently, *so* their grades improved.

B. The students visited the Writing Centre frequently; *therefore*, their grades improved.

1. We went camping. We saw a lot of interesting wildlife.

A.

B.

2. We can go wind surfing. We can go swimming.

A.

B.

3. I do not want these pastries. The fruit looks appealing.

A.

B.

4. I would like to go with you. I have other plans.

A.

B.

5. I always plan to visit the gym. I always find an excuse not to go.

A.

B.

6. Feeling healthy important to me. I eat fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains.

A.

B.

7. The bonfire was fun. We plan to meet again soon.

A.

B.

Joining a Dependent Clause to an Independent Clause: Subordination

Coordination is used to join two independent clauses together. **Subordination** is used to join a dependent clause and an independent clause. Subordinating conjunctions are also called dependent marker words, since these words often signify a dependent clause.

We will go camping if you are ready.

The subordinating conjunction *if* joins the dependent clause *if you are ready* to the independent clause *we will go camping*.

If the dependent clause comes before the independent clause in the sentence, a comma is placed after the dependent clause. There is no comma if the independent clause comes first.

DC, IC

IC DC

Common Subordinating Conjunctions

if	when	what	as	until	before
as if	whenever	how	as long as	unless	after
even if	where	who	as soon as	although	while
whether	why	whose	even though	since	that

Exercise 8: Subordination

Connect the sentences in each question by turning one independent clause into a dependent clause using a subordinating conjunction.

Example

We studied together. We wrote the test.

IC

DC

We studied together before we wrote the test.

or

Before we wrote the test, we studied together.

DC

IC

1. I will get a new hairstyle. I can afford it.
2. Family members can be very supportive. They can also be very critical.
3. I enjoy camping. I prefer natural settings.
4. I heard about this book many times. I never read it before today.
5. Finish eating your dinner. We will go for a walk.