

SUBJECTS, PREDICATES, OBJECTS, AND COMPLEMENTS

SUBJECTS

Subjects are entities, which accomplish action (i.e., the doer of the action) or experience a state of being.

SINGULAR, PLURAL, COMPOUND, AND COMPLEX SUBJECTS

Subjects can be simple (singular or plural), compound, or complex. However, they are without a doubt the main entity referred to in the sentence.

Example:

Elvis is a rock star. (Simple + Singular)

The Rolling Stones are rock stars. (Simple + Plural)

Eve and Missy Elliott are Hip-Hop divas, not rock stars. (Compound)

The Flying Burrito Brothers are an early country-rock band (a Phrase)

Working hard to get songs heard makes rock stars. (a Complex Clause)

Note: Typically, Complex Subjects are either phrases or clauses.

SIMPLE AND COMPLETE SUBJECTS

Subjects may be categorized as Simple or Complete.

Example:

The blue fish will be easy to catch.

The blue fish (Complete Subject)

Notice how the Complete Subject contains THE, an article/determiner; BLUE, an adjective; and, FISH, a noun.

Fish (Simple Subject)

Notice how the Simple Subject contains only the noun itself.

Subjects may be comprised of nouns, pronouns, a verbal (a gerund or infinitive), noun phrases, or clauses.

NOUN PHRASES

Another type of subject is a Noun Phrase. A Noun Phrase is comprised of a noun and any modifiers. Example:

Fish

A Fish

A Flying fish

The Largest of the Flying Fish

NOUN CLAUSES

Another type of subject is a Noun Clause. Clauses are complex subjects as they are not easily understood or identifiable. Example:

Letting off the gas saved our lives inevitably.

Working for the children's museum is a commendable yet stressful endeavor.

PREDICATES

Predicates are comprised of the main verb and anything following it (e.g. phrases, dependent clauses, modifiers).

EX:

Chris loves to go bowling.

The predicate includes the verb LOVES and the phrase TO GO BOWLING.

Predicates may be singular or compound.

EX:

Chris is sad. (Singular)

Chris is sad and is crying. (Compound)

COMPOUND PREDICATES VERSUS COMPOUND SENTENCES

Note: Knowledge of Compound Predicates is important. Compound Predicates are often mistakenly provided commas.

EX: (incorrect)

Chris is sad, and is crying.

The comma placed before the AND is incorrect. Commas are only used before a conjunction (e.g., And, But, So, etc.) if a compound sentence is present. Typically, you can identify that a subject is present on the other side of the conjunction (if the sentence is compound).

EX:

Chris is sad, and he is crying.

Notice that two sentences are present:

Chris is sad.

S/He is crying.

OBJECTS

Objects are typically nouns or noun clauses which are acted upon (directly or indirectly) by the subject of the sentence. Objects receive things (actions or intentions) or are found at the end of an indication (for time, space, or another relationship).

Objects are "receivers," while subjects of the sentence are "doers."

DIRECT OBJECTS

Direct objects receive the action of a verb (or verbal).

Example:

Todd threw the rock.
Sarah played the guitar.

Note: Direct objects may be placed in the subject position of a declarative sentence when the passive voice is used. However, typically, direct objects should be placed at the end of sentences.

Example:

The rock was thrown by Todd.
The guitar was played by Sarah.

INDIRECT OBJECTS

Indirect objects are received by the direct object. Generally, indirect objects express for whom or to whom something is done or intended.

Example:

Todd threw the rock to Tabitha.
Sarah played the guitar for Matt.

OBJECTS OF THE PREPOSITION

Objects of the preposition receive spatial or contextual information from prepositions. Typically, these objects appear in prepositional phrases.

Example:

Todd threw the rock to Tabitha at the park.
Sarah played the guitar for Matt at her house.

Prepositional phrases may appear almost anywhere in the sentence.

Example:

At the park, Todd threw the rock to Tabitha.
At her house, Sarah played the guitar for Matt.

-or-

Todd, at the park, threw the rock to Tabitha.
Sarah played the guitar at her house for Matt.

COMPLEMENTS

SUBJECT COMPLEMENTS

Subject Complements seem to be exactly what they sound like: “compliments.” However, “complements” (in a grammatical sense) can be good or bad.

ACTION (with OBJECTS)

In a sentence with an action verb,

Example:

Mary ran home.

Mary is the SUBJECT. RAN is the action verb. And, HOME is the object.

NON-ACTION (with COMPLEMENTS)

In a sentence with a non-action verb (typically, a linking verb or a sensory verb),
Example:
Mary is kind.

Mary is the SUBJECT. IS is the linking verb. And, KIND is the complement (more specifically, the subject complement).

Just think: When you are complementing a subject, you have to have a subject complement.

Subject Complements may be:
Nouns (also called, Predicate Nouns)
Example:
Jim is a teacher

Numerals
Example:
Jim is first.

Noun Phrases
Example:
Jim is a wonderful teacher.

Adjectives (also called, Predicate Adjectives)
Example:
Jim is awesome.

Adjective Phrases
Example:
Jim is really very awesome.

LINKING VERBS & SENSORY VERBS

Subject Complements are preceded by linking verbs or sensory verbs. That is, after a linking or sensory verb, one should expect to find a complement.

Linking verbs include the following:

Am
Is
Are
Was
Were
Be
Been
Will

Example:

Jennifer is famous.

Sensory Verbs are verbs which lead to a sense; they may include:

Seems

Appears

Smells

Tastes

Feels

Sounds

Example:

The apartment smells foul.

COMPLEMENTS AND STATE OF BEING

Now, subject complements do not have to be “nice” or “kind” things. Complements may convey a range of “states of being.”

Example:

Mary is nice.

Mary is happy.

Mary is foolish.

Mary is a loser.

Mary is a selfish wench.

All of the endings following the IS are complements.

LINKS, SENSES, AND THE EQUAL SIGN

Complements are normally preceded by a linking verb or a sensory verb.

The linking verb or sensory verb may act like an equal sign.

Example:

Mary is kind.

Mary = kind.

The apartment smells foul.

The apartment = foul.

You do not see this type of relationship with action verbs (this provides a clue that you are dealing with a complement and not an object).

OBJECT COMPLEMENTS

Another type of complement is the object complement. An object complement completes the meaning of an object (some say that the object complement renames or provides description to the object).

In a sense, they complement the object (typically when action verbs are present), referring to the same person, place, or thing (as the object).

Object complements may be:

Nouns

Example:

James was named King.

Noun Phrases

Example:

Anthony grabbed the glass a deep container.

Noun Clauses

Example:

Norman wrote a book where he unveiled his life story.

Adjectives

Example:

Meredith played the cello stringless.